

III A SAGA ON HOME VIDEO



A GUIDE BY NATHAN P. BUTLER

SECOND EDITION - VOL. 3 OF 3

A Saga on Home Video

A Fan's Guide to U.S. *Star Wars* Home Video Releases

Second Edition (2021)
Volume III

NATHAN P. BUTLER

Copyright © 2017 – 2021 Nathan P. Butler. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles or reviews.

Star Wars is the intellectual property of Lucasfilm Ltd. and Walt Disney Company. No copyright infringement is intended or implied. *A Saga on Home Video* is a scholarly source-work that has not been licensed or authorized by any person or entity associated with Lucasfilm Ltd., Walt Disney Company, 20th Century Fox, or any licensee thereof.

Cover art and interior photos are all © 2017 – 2021 Nathan P. Butler. Photos were all taken of specific items from the personal collection of Nathan P. Butler. No stock or promotional cover images have been used.

DEDICATION

To my wife, Jodi, who has indulged this collecting obsession with encouragement, few complaints, and a minimum of bribery required

and

To my son, Cade, for whom that same collecting obsession might one day prove itself to be either an inspiration or a cautionary tale

CHAPTERS

Preface to Volume III	1
10 Teddy Bears, Towanis, and Trouble Again (1990 – 2004)	7
11 Genndy Goes Micro (2005 – 2007)	49
12 Rewriting the Clone Wars (2008 – 2020)	67
13 Joining the Rebellion (2014 – 2018)	171
14 A Home Video Kaztastrophe (2019 – 2020)	191
15 Empire of Streams (2019 – 2021)	197
16 Brick by Brick (2005 – 2021)	211
17 Behind the Curtain (1979 – 2020)	239
18 A Cantina Full of Oddballs (1990 – 2015)	277
19 This is the Way	333
Afterword: Into the Unknown	355

Chapters in Other Volumes

Vol. I

Introduction: The Making of a “Collection”
1. Glimmers of Hope (1977 – 1980)
2. The Great Format War (1982 – 1994)
3. The Original... One Last Time (1993 – 1995)
4. See It Again... For the First Time (1997 – 1998)
5. Rise of DVD, Demise of VHS (2000 – 2010)
6. The Lucas Films in HD (2008 – 2015)

Vol. II

7. Enter: Disney (2016 – 2017)
8. Rise of 4K, Demise of 3D (2018)
9. All Together Now (2019 – 2020)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A guide like this (and the collection that spawned it) benefits greatly from like-minded collectors. *Star Wars* home video collectors are a community within a community, a small niche area within a much broader fandom. We share ideas, knowledge, obscure discoveries, and sometimes even items that we no longer want or need but wish to pass along to a fellow collector.

Justin Berger's fantastic *Star Wars* Home Video group on Facebook (facebook.com/groups/swhomevideo) has become my favorite haunt on social media, where likeminded fans have gathered to share their love of collecting the films and other productions in their many forms across many formats. It remains one of the few places within online fandom where we rarely need to worry about the kind of toxicity that is so often found in other venues. My thanks to everyone who has engaged in discussion with me there and to Justin for setting up that great community.

Both within that Facebook group and among the viewership of my *From the Star Wars Home Video Library* series on YouTube, I have encountered numerous fellow fans who have shared information, helped me acquire products, and sometimes generously donated items into my collection from their own. In that regard, I wish to extend my heartfelt thanks to Bryan Absher, Aziz Al Sumait, Anthony Baccelliere, Luke Bastyr, Emiliano M. Becco, Dan L. Beeman, Jared Bell, the aforementioned Justin Berger, Jamie Bisson, Rikter Blaksvn, Stephen Bove, Hunter Alex Brown, Owen Brown, Kozmo Bunny, Darin Chambers, Chris Clarke, Lucas Coker, Jacob Comstock, Paul de la Rosa, Matt Desrochers, David Dumbell, Ryan Dunn, Justin Farnell, Matthew Fox, Claude Franklin, Sergey Geller, Josh Gibson, Jeremy Goss, Fr. Matthew Hardesty, Sam Hatch, Michael Heckman, Hadi Heydari, Tom Holste, Sam Howard, Ron Humphris, Stephen Jenkins, Darko Jukic, Jacob Kapoor, John Keane, Arnar Marvin Kristjánsson, James Kruczek, Aleks Kruz, Paul Landis, Weston LeDoux, Neil Lowery, Jason Luttrull, Mat from Techmoan, John Maxwell, Efrain G. Mejias, Dean Mosca, George Ooi, Adam Parish, Michael Picher, Thomas Quinn, Jeff Rabjohns, Ricky Rae, Tony Reese, Ruud Renders, Justin Richert, Andrew Robinson, Rebecca Samuels, J.D. Sanders, John Scoleri, Julian Smith, Brian Snook, James Snow, Jerry Stephens, Adam Tickner, Juan Angel Vallejo III, Wiebe van der Werk, Nathan Veneman, Max Volume, Lance Worth, and the late Will Wright. I especially wish to thank both Matthew Frey and Mark Westcott, whose donation of large chunks of their own libraries into mine greatly enhanced this guide and my own collection in recent years. There are also those to thank whose full names I do not know, often only usernames, some of whom may already be listed above: ZoltonF,

TheLegendKiller2100, Legofan2001, PixarMan2001, Devinnytroy, The Three Lemons, VintageVHSTreasures, Troy, and Kurt.

My own early interest in *Star Wars* Home Video, even before I became a collector myself, was stoked by the excellent (albeit now outdated) image collection at *SWonVideo.com*. A timeline of releases that was once maintained on *DavisDVD.com* by Patrick Mirza also served as an inspiration and foundation for an attempt to catalog such releases in my own early, meager way, within the pages of my *Star Wars Timeline Gold* before deciding that such a listing deserved a narrative guide of its own.

I am also indebted to the authors of the fantastic *Star Wars: Year by Year*, which helped clarify some of the release dates herein beyond mere years. Turnabout is fair play, I suppose. Of that great tome's writers, two of them (Dan Wallace and Pablo Hidalgo) previously referenced my fan-made *Star Wars* chronology project for their own *Essential Guides*. Other very helpful resources for release dates and other information included listings on Amazon (and its international counterparts like Amazon UK), *Blu-ray.com*, the LaserDisc Database, and *StarWarsMoviePoster.com*. (As I am not an expert by any means in *Star Wars* posters or action figures, *StarWarsMoviePoster.com* and assistance from Matt Desrochers, respectively, were invaluable when examining those items.)

I'd also like to take a moment here to apologize (only somewhat tongue-in-cheek) to fellow collectors who have seen my YouTube videos or read this guide (in its current or first edition form), only to be compelled to make more home video purchases. Fellow collector David Allen Brown coined the term "Butlered" on the *Star Wars* Home Video Facebook group, which he said was a verb that means, "When you buy lots of stuff because Nathan P. Butler shows you a video with cool *Star Wars* stuff and you realize your collection is somehow incomplete without it." As he put it, an example of the phrase in use would be: "My wife wants to speak to me in budget committee because we've been Butlered again."

Finally, I know that this guide, my personal collection, and so much more would not have been possible without the understanding and patience of my wife and fellow *Star Wars* fan, Jodi. I dove heavily into *Star Wars* home video collecting the same year we were married, and as that collection has grown, the YouTube series has taken on a life of its own, and now two editions of this guide have been in the works, she has yet to question my sanity or choices, even when sometimes the weight of a self-imposed task like this three-volume tome started to feel more like work than play and threatened to cause, rather than relieve, stress. I look forward to the day when she and I introduce our little Cade to the true depth of the *Star Wars* saga.

PATREON CREDITS

On Oct. 17, 2017, I took a chance and finally launched a Patreon (patreon.com/nathanpbutler) to help offset the costs of things like the home video purchases that form the backbone of this book. In the process, it also provided an avenue through which to provide exclusive content to supporters of my work that have been willing to put their hard-earned dollars on the line to help me keep my various projects going strong.

All supporters, whether they are Travelers Through the Butlerniverse (\$1 patrons that receive thanks in monthly update videos on Patreon and YouTube), Denizens of the Butlerniverse (\$5 patrons that also receive exclusive audio commentaries), or Nobility of the Butlerniverse (\$10 patrons that also receive exclusive Q&A videos each month on top of everything else), are appreciated, and this second edition of *A Saga on Home Video* has finally given me the opportunity to provide them with the thanks in print that they have been promised for so long.

My heartfelt thanks go out to the following Patreon supporters (Oct. 17, 2017, through Oct. 31, 2021): Ben Abrams, Joseph C. Balaich, Andrew Bettis, “BigMacDavis,” Jamie Bisson, David Bittner, Joseph Blankenship, Levi Bond, Elias Breitner, Dave Broadway, Candi Cabaniss, Craig Clayton, Jonathan Confer, Travis Cook, Bobby Craig, Martin Dahl, Matt Desrochers, Jeff Ellis, Preston Ellis, Pavel Gerasimov, Andrew Gilbertson, Mitch Godfrey, Jeremy Goss, Matthew Hardesty, Matthew Hadish, Sam Howard, Jaina Hunt, Kai Jacoby, Tony Jenkins, John, Jacob Kapoor, Kevin Kreiner, Bon Lainez, Walker Langstraat, Chris Lewis, Chris Lock, Anas Maatough, Daniel Marchant, Robert Medina, Aaron Melzak, Steven Milicia, Chris Morgan, Nathan W. Mortimer, Jeremiah Mustered, Thomas Myers, Caleb Owens, “PDotE,” Austin Pearce, Kyle Pelegri, Jonathan Pickens, Jeff Rabjohns, Jared Rascher, David Ray, Justin Richert, Alexandre Santos, Gary Sherwood, “Skytrypalasmr,” Brian Snook, Ben P. Stein, Connor Stierman, Travis Taylor, Michael Torson, Casey Urie, Chris Walker, Joey Zitzman, and my very first Patreon supporter ever, Benjamin Handelman.

PREFACE TO VOLUME III

I was as *Star Wars* podcaster for 18 years, starting back on the day *Attack of the Clones* hit theaters in the United States and continuing through the advent of the term “podcasting” and into an era when podcasts were no longer a niche hobby but instead a thriving form of digital media. By far the podcast I hosted the longest (2012 – 2020), right up until my retirement from podcasting, was a show called *Star Wars Beyond the Films*, wherein fellow host Mark Hurliman and I discussed *Star Wars* novels, comics, video games, and more.

If I were to give this final volume of *A Saga on Home Video*’s second edition a name, it would be the same: *Beyond the Films*. For home video collectors, that concept is not one of adventures in print or in video game form but instead quite literally releases that are not the current 11 live action *Star Wars* films. (Yes, even *The Clone Wars* animated movie is somewhat “beyond the films” in the eyes of many, as it is considered part of the broader whole of *The Clone Wars* cartoon series and consists of what were originally to be four episodes thereof.) It is to this galaxy of TV series, behind-the-scenes programs, and oddball items that we turn to in *Volume III*.

Rather than taking a chronological approach, this volume is presented by topic. We start with the “serious” stories: the pre-2008 animated series (what were designated in the original Legends continuity of *Star Wars* stories as “C-Canon”), then each subsequent, now-canonical series in order of airing. We then explore the parody universe of *LEGO Star Wars* stories before turning away from fiction to examine behind-the-scenes material. A final product-focused chapter gathers together miscellaneous items that just don’t fit anywhere else. Finally, we end our exploration with advice for *Star Wars* home video collecting and a brief afterword as we look toward an increasingly digital, rather than physical, media landscape.

The time has come to complete our shared, decades-long exploration of American *Star Wars* home video releases. Welcome to *A Saga on Home Video*. Thank you for reading, and may the Force be with you

A Brief Guide to *Volume III*

Previously...

Volume I began exploration of American *Star Wars* home video releases with *Episodes I – VI* through their high definition reissues and digital debut in 2015.

Our exploration of the live action, theatrical films on home video then continued in *Volume II*, wherein the *Sequel Trilogy* and *Anthology* films joined the conversation.

Chapter 10: Teddy Bears, Towanis, and Trouble Again (1990 – 2004)

Our coverage of *Star Wars* “beyond the films” turns to the small screen realm of television in this chapter, which covers the *Ewok* telemovies and the first two *Star Wars* cartoon series: *Droid* and *Ewoks*, preceded by a very brief mention of *The Star Wars Holiday Special*.

Chapter 11: Genndy Goes Micro (2005 – 2007)

We examine the somewhat experimental *Clone Wars* “micro-series” and the various toy pack-ins that carried on its legacy.

Chapter 12: Rewriting the Clone Wars (2008 – 2020)

Our focus shifts to *The Clone Wars* film and television series. (Yes, this is where *The Clone Wars* film is finally covered in detail.)

Chapter 13: Joining the Rebellion (2014 – 2018)

Rebels brings us the first *Star Wars* television series entirely handled by Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment on home video.

Chapter 14: A Home Video Kaztastrophe (2019 – 2020)

We turn to *Resistance* and address how poorly it was handled on home video (when it reached home video at all).

Chapter 15: Empire of Streams (2019 – 2021)

We briefly examine content provided through Disney+, as the dominance of streaming services leaves us without much of this content on physical media.

Chapter 16: Brick by Brick (2005 – 2021)

We leave the realm of serious *Star Wars* storytelling and forge ahead into the outright parodies/comedies of the *LEGO Star Wars* product line.

Chapter 17: Behind the Curtain (1979 – 2020)

While not meant to be comprehensive, this chapter delves into the making of the saga through various behind-the-scenes programs.

Chapter 18: A Cantina Full of Oddballs (1990 – 2015)

Some items just don't really fit into this guide's other chapters. You will find them here. Expect the unexpected.

Chapter 19: This is the Way

Rather than covering home video items, this chapter provides tips and suggestions for fellow *Star Wars* home video collectors, both new and experienced.

Afterword: Into the Unknown

As one might expect, the afterword provides some final thoughts as home video collecting enters uncharted waters in an era dominated by digital, rather than physical, content.

Readers of the first edition of this guide will probably notice what's *not* included in any volume of this new, second edition: checklists of items discussed. I found that the checklists added a lot of length to an already long book (so long that it eventually necessitated multiple volumes, as you already know). They were also unwieldy, though nice to have. Instead, I will be working on a "living spreadsheet" of my collection that I will make available on nathanpbutler.com in the future. A downloadable, sortable, editable file seems far more useful in the long run than even photocopying checklists like the ones found in the first edition.

A Brief Guide to Sidebars

Sections like this, which are set aside in separate, darker boxes, are referred to as "sidebars." They address various related (but often somewhat tangential) topics that broaden our look at *Star Wars* on home video but are not necessarily an integral part of the American release narrative. Not all sidebar types are present in all three volumes. Three sidebar categories are new to this edition (and listed last below).

Meanwhile in [Insert Country/Region]

These sidebars focus on various noteworthy foreign releases. They often

provide a contrast to the American home video market, but sometimes they are items that were just too interesting to ignore. These sidebars always note the location and date of the item(s) in question.

Forever Tinkering

George Lucas is known for making frequent changes to his films after their initial release. This category of sidebar provides brief opinions on these changes to the live action films without aiming to be a comprehensive list of those changes.

Changes for Better and/or Worse

This category is similar to *Forever Tinkering* but takes a much more comprehensive approach. It aims to detail the various changes between edits of *Star Wars* television series episodes that have been far less documented than changes to the live action films.

For a More Digital Age

These sidebars are used to call out digital releases or bonus items, whether through venues that allow digital purchases (e.g. iTunes) or streaming services (e.g. Disney+).

Go Figure: Hasbro Commemorates Home Video

This type of sidebar addresses Hasbro action figure releases that were designed to celebrate particular *Star Wars* home video releases (but did *not* include home video items themselves, sometimes leading to confusion).¹

Spectacles for the Spectacle

Of the 11 live action *Star Wars* theatrical films to date, 6 have been shown in 3D theatrically (with 2 more shown in 3D only at conventions), and 5 have had Blu-ray 3D releases (though only 2 of those 5 did in America). With 3D a fun niche within *Star Wars* home and theatrical viewing, this sidebar is designed to provide a look at the various *Star Wars* RealD 3D glasses produced to celebrate *Star Wars* theatrical 3D releases, which may also be used with home theater setups that use RealD passive 3D when playing Blu-ray 3D discs.

¹ As I'm not a figure collector myself, much of the information for these sidebars comes from fellow collector Matt Desrochers.

Across the Galaxy

This final category simply provides pictures of various releases from different regions side-by-side, even when not all of those releases are actually covered in their own sidebars. Why? I just find that kind of side-by-side imagery compelling and interesting, and I hope you will too.

10 TEDDY BEARS, TOWANIS, AND TROUBLE AGAIN (1990 – 2004)

Until now (i.e. in *Volumes I – II*), our focus has been on the live action *Star Wars* films that sit at the core of the saga. The franchise that Lucas built (and that Disney is now continuing to build and renovate) has made numerous forays onto the small screen on broadcast television, cable, and streaming services, many of which have then been released for subsequent viewing on home video. In this chapter, we will explore the home video releases for the *Ewok Adventures* telemovies and the two mid-1980s *Star Wars* cartoon series: *Droids* and *Ewoks*. We start, however, with the black sheep (nerf?) of the *Star Wars* television family...

Despised and Mostly Unreleased (Never)

If the history of the *Star Wars* live action films on home video is one of excess with every film released repeatedly and collections growing rapidly, the history of fictional 1970s – 1980s *Star Wars* television programs is the opposite, filled with disappointing releases and large gaps made by programs never released on home video in the U.S. at all.

It is worth noting that the first new fictional *Star Wars* program to air on television had been *The Star Wars Holiday Special*, which aired on CBS on Nov. 17, 1978. However, since that (mostly reviled) program has never been officially released on home video in its entirety, there are no releases to discuss here. This situation has caused bootlegs to proliferate in various forms over the decades, from simple VHS recordings and “dubs” (duplicated copies with moderate quality loss) sold face-to-face by bootleggers at conventions to modern attempts to digitally restore the special and release it online via digital file sharing. The very absence of the

special from the home video market and Lucas' personal hatred for the production have made *The Star Wars Holiday Special* into the equivalent of a *Star Wars* urban legend. ("Surely it can't be as bad as they say, so let's hunt down a copy and see for ourselves! Oh, the horror! It really *is* that bad!")

Only one portion of *The Star Wars Holiday Special* has been officially released on home video or for streaming. *The Story of the Faithful Wookiee*, Nelvana Ltd.'s cartoon segment that introduced the world to Boba Fett, was included on Disc 8 of *The Complete Saga* (AKA *6-Movie Collection*) on Blu-ray in 2011, 2015, and 2017, albeit buried within the bonus content for *The Empire Strikes Back*.² It was also then carried over from that set into the bonus features of the *Skywalker Saga* and individual *Ultimate Collector's Edition* TESB releases in 2020.³

One would hope that the entire special will one day see an official release, so that a new generation can experience (and be tormented by) this piece of the saga's checkered, televised past. If nothing else, it would simply be nice for *The Star Wars Holiday Special* to cease being an obvious, gaping hole in the *Star Wars* home video library.

For a More Digital Age (2021)

43 years after airing on CBS and a decade after being hidden away within *The Complete Saga*'s bonus features, *The Story of the Faithful Wookiee* was added to Disney+ on Apr. 2, 2021, as part of the initial content for what the service called the *Vintage* collection. Like its appearance within Blu-ray bonus features, the cartoon was available in HD on Disney+. No extras were included.

² As noted previously, to view *The Story of the Faithful Wookiee*, navigate to *V* (TESB), then *Pursued by the Imperial Fleet*. Select *The Collection* and then the entry for the *Boba Fett Prototype Costume*. Once within that entry, select *First Look* from the menu. After several seconds, the cartoon will begin playing.

³ On the TESB bonus features Blu-ray disc, go to *Bonus Features*, then *Legacy Content*, then *The Collection*. Play the *Boba Fett Prototype Costume* segment, which will play a turnaround and some stills of the costume, followed by a brief title card (*Boba Fett: First Look*, carried over from the 2011 Blu-ray) and then the cartoon itself, within the same frame as the 2011 Blu-ray bonus features. This was the equivalent of clicking "play all" on the 2011 disc.

Changes for Better and/or Worse:

***The Story of the Faithful Wookiee* on Blu-ray and Disney+
(2011, 2015, 2017, 2021)**

As this is our first time focusing specifically on this first *Star Wars* animated tale, we should look at how it was included on both Blu-ray and on Disney+, rather than just the minor changes it underwent for Disney+.

First, we should consider context for those who might never have seen *The Star Wars Holiday Special* as a whole. When originally aired, *The Story of the Faithful Wookiee* was essentially a Rebel mission log that was watched by Chewbacca's son, Lumpawarrump (AKA Lumpy)⁴. It began around 52 min. into the program, and while we did see various symbols appear on Lumpy's screen before the cartoon began playing, as soon as it *did* begin playing, it simply started at full screen without any transition wipe. It featured no English title but did include a title screen (and end screen) with text in a non-Aurebesh, in-universe language. The fact that this was a record being viewed by Lumpy explains the narration from Captain Kazan, in-universe on-screen text, and the way the cartoon ends with a sort of "going to static" animation. In the original airing, this was followed by a shot of Lumpy's screen scrolling through symbols before turning off entirely.

When first introduced on Blu-ray in 2011 via the *Episodes IV – VI Archives* bonus disc of *The Complete Saga*, the cartoon was essentially identical, but it was shown within a frame that fit the menu design of the set (golden bars above and below with imagery from the TESSB asteroid field chase to either side). Unfortunately, based on how the bonus features were designed for the set, viewers could not navigate forward or backward within the cartoon, only restart it. This was how it remained on Blu-ray through the subsequent reissues of 2015 and 2017.

When TESSB received its own Blu-ray of bonus features in 2020, the various portions of the *Boba Fett Prototype Costume* section of the 2011 disc were merged into a single video. It all played the same as having clicked "play all" with the 2011 disc, but the fact that this was all one video track meant that fans could finally fast forward and rewind as desired. The video was still in its 2011 frame, though, so we still could not watch it at full

⁴ He would later take the name "Lumpawaroo" in the Legends continuity, changing his nickname to "Waroo," after completing a rite of passage in Michael P. Kube-McDowell's novel *Tyrant's Test* (1996). The character would reappear in the Story Group's current canon, primarily using the latter name (and nickname).

screen height without a zoom feature on our hardware.

For its Disney+ debut, *The Story of the Faithful Wookiee* was given a brand new, English title screen with its official title. This remained on the screen briefly before the aired content began, which still included the original, in-universe, non-Aurebesh title text. The rest of the cartoon was unchanged from its original airing (other than having been upscaled to high definition), which meant that this was the first time since 1978 that fans could legally (i.e. without a bootleg) view the cartoon at full screen height without any kind of added frame. The new title screen and the lack of a frame made this the superior way to watch this “vintage” *Star Wars* adventure.

Cindel Towani is Scarred for Life (1990 – 2004)

1984 – 1986 was an odd period for *Star Wars*. The comics from Marvel were slowly winding down⁵, the roleplaying game from West End Games had yet to launch⁶, and the kickoff of the Official Continuity of Expanded Universe materials was still the better part of a decade away⁷. These were the first years without a new theatrical *Star Wars* film or anticipation thereof since 1977 (or Nov. 1976 if one counts the novelization and pre-release media coverage that provided anticipation for ANH). Instead, *Star Wars* turned to the small screen.

Eighteen months after *Return of the Jedi* hit theaters, ABC⁸ took viewers on another trip to the forest moon of Endor in the television special *The Ewok Adventure* (retitled *Caravan of Courage: An Ewok Adventure* for its European theatrical release) on Nov. 25, 1984. The story follows young Cindel and Mace Towani as they seek out their missing parents, Jeremitt and Catarine, after a star cruiser crash. They are aided along the way by Wicket W. Warrick and his fellow Ewoks, who are far more adept with

⁵ The final regular issue went on sale during the summer of 1986, and even the cartoon spinoff comics would wrap up by the end of 1987 in the U.S.

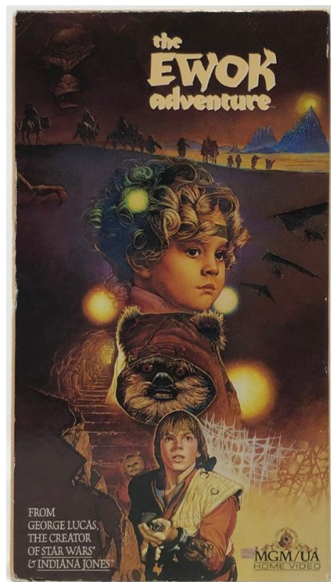
⁶ It did not arrive until Oct. 1987.

⁷ It kicked off in 1991 with *Heir to the Empire* in May and *Dark Empire's* first issue in Dec.

⁸ It was perhaps fitting that ABC was home to these early *Star Wars* telemovies and cartoons, given that ABC was acquired by Walt Disney Company in 1995, just as Lucasfilm would be 17 years later, followed by 20th Century Fox in 2019.

magic (or a magical use of the Force, similar to the Nightsisters) than ROTJ viewers would ever have expected.

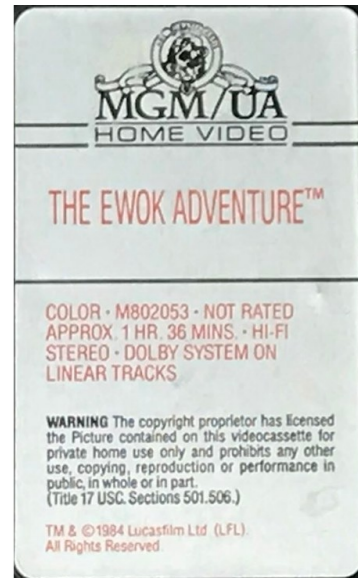
Not counting *The Star Wars Holiday Special*, since it has never seen home video release, *Caravan of Courage* was the live action *Star Wars* fiction story that took the longest to come to home video in the United States. Whereas *A New Hope* had previously held that record at five years, 1984's *The Ewok Adventure* took six years, not reaching VHS and CLV extended play LaserDisc until 1990. It did so in a bare-bones, film-only release through MGM/UA (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer/United Artists) Home Video. Both LaserDisc and VHS used artwork similar to Kazuhiko Sano's style A poster (i.e. Cindel Towani, Wicket W. Warrick, and Mace Towani featured prominently in a vertical line with another Ewok behind Mace, the "caravan" above and behind them, and the Gorax in the upper left), but with characters posed slightly differently.⁹



The Ewok Adventure
(VHS, 1990)



Standard retail label



Silver rental label

⁹ I am no expert on *Star Wars* poster art. Any information herein on *Star Wars* poster art, such as that used for home video covers or art cards, comes from research online, especially through the great resource galleries at StarWarsMoviePoster.com.



The Ewok Adventure (LaserDisc, 1990)



Disc label

This first TV movie (“telemovie”) was followed a year later by *Ewoks: The Battle for Endor* on Nov. 24, 1985, which (spoiler alert!) saw Cindel witness the deaths of her brother and both parents (along with a lot of Ewoks), then face captivity under their killers, the Sanyassan Marauders, led by King Terak. The film was notable for the witch character Charal, who was later retroactively labeled a Nightsister, and for likely emotionally scarring children viewing the special (and *definitely* scarring Cindel Towani¹⁰).

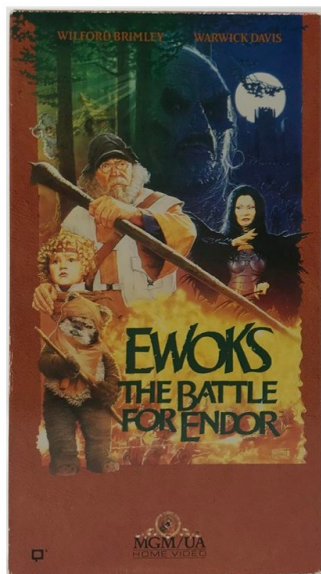
Ewoks: The Battle for Endor arrived on MGM/UA home video in 1990 alongside *The Ewok Adventure* in similarly bare-bones VHS and CLV extended play LaserDisc releases. (For the record, that means this telemovie ties with ANH as a live action *Star Wars* fiction production that took five years to reach home video in the U.S.) Both covers featured Randy Berrett’s style A poster artwork.

Both telemovies’ VHS releases featured two label variants: a standard gray and white version with black text for retail copies and a silver label with pink/red text for rental copies.¹¹ The LaserDisc labels were simple, standardized MGM/UA Home Video labels: white with two red, horizontal

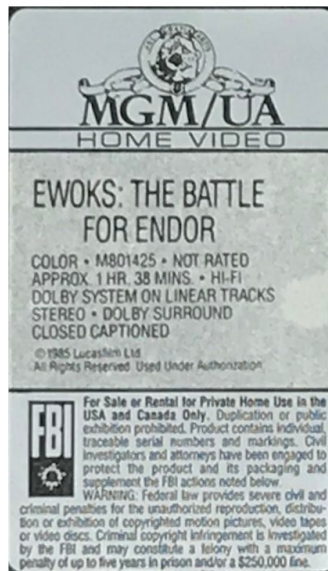
¹⁰ After *The Battle for Endor*, Cindel grew up to be a journalist, as seen in the Legends continuity novel *Tyrant’s Test*. It was great to see her appear in that continuity again, and, hey, hopefully being a journalist could pay some of those therapy bills!

¹¹ Former rental copies of the *Ewok* films are common on the secondary market today. If seeking rental or retail specifically, make sure to see the label before purchase.

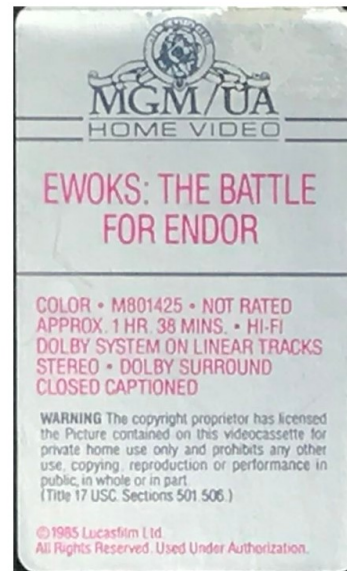
stripes (above the title at the bottom and across the “Home Video” line in the company logo).



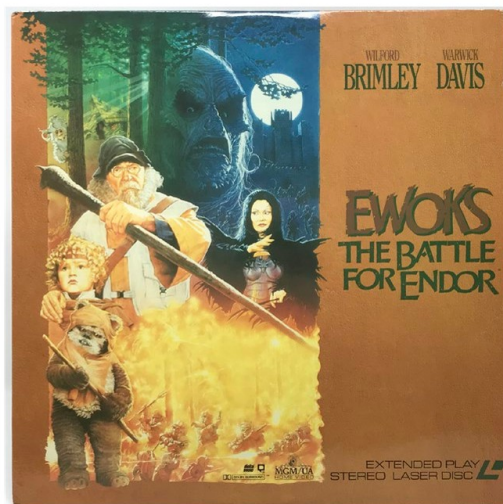
Ewoks: The Battle for Endor (VHS, 1990)



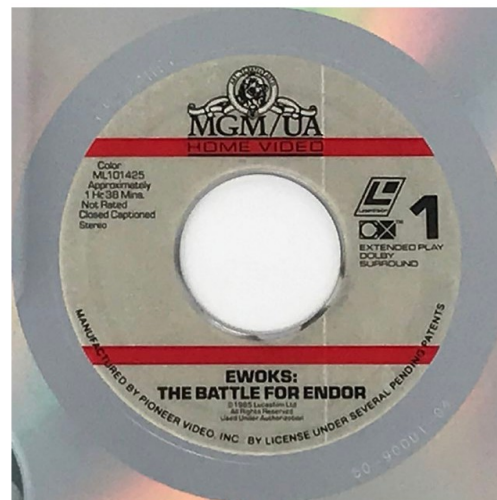
Standard retail label



Silver rental label



Ewoks: The Battle for Endor
(LaserDisc, 1990)



Disc label

Meanwhile in Japan (1986 – 1988)

Fans in Japan did not have to wait half a decade or more to view the *Ewok Adventures* at home. *Caravan of Courage: An Ewok Adventure* was released by CBS/Fox Video in Japan in 1986, while *Ewoks: The Battle for Endor* arrived via MGM/UA Home Video in 1988. This was perhaps unsurprising, since both received theatrical releases in other regions, while only appearing on television in America.

The *Caravan of Courage* release featured cover art from the international style B poster by Drew Struzan. It also included a yellow paper insert with information about the program, which included artwork from Kazuhiko Sano's style A poster. The disc label was in a style common for this era from CBS/Fox Video: white with black text and a blue section at the top that included the CBS/Fox Video logo.



Caravan of Courage: An Ewok Adventure (Japanese LaserDisc, 1986) – with obi



Jacket without obi



Insert



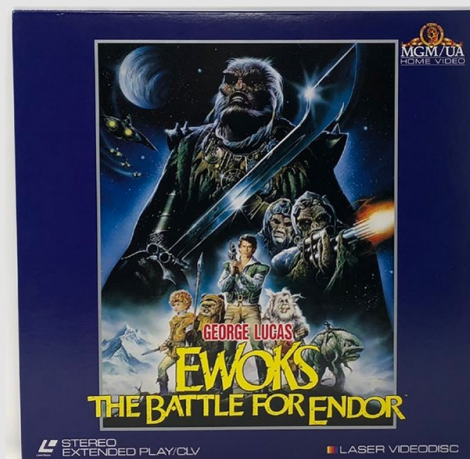
Disc label

The artwork for *Evoks: The Battle for Endor*, which came from the international style B poster by Renato Casaro, was particularly amusing on the Japanese LaserDisc jacket, as it left out Noa entirely, presented Cindel with a knife like she was about to go “Chucky” on someone, and a

character that resembled Alex Rogan from *The Last Starfighter* featured prominently with a blaster. The latter was apparently meant to be Mace Towani... who died in the story's opening minutes.¹² This time, the insert was blue, as was the entire disc label.



Ewoks: The Battle for Endor (Japanese LaserDisc, 1988) – with obi



Jacket without obi



Insert



Disc label

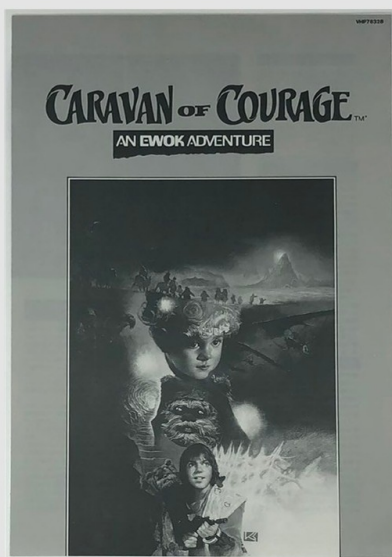
In 1987, between these two LaserDisc releases, Japan also saw its final *Star Wars* VHD product with a CBS/Fox Video release of *Caravan of Courage*. Given the telemovie's length, it was able to be spread across both sides of a single disc, making this the only fictional *Star Wars* tale on VHD

¹² I totally would have watched the movie that poster seemed to be advertising!

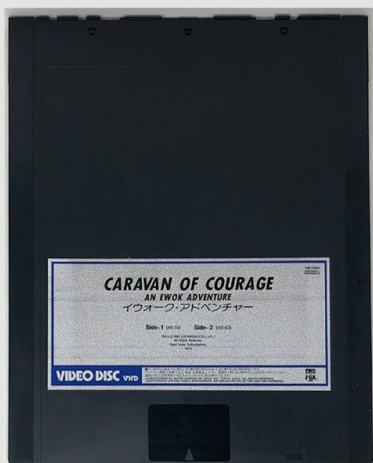
to require only a single caddy, and one of only two (with the behind-the-scenes double-feature) to come in a single slipcover instead of two of each or two VHDs in a single slipcover. It was also the only *Star Wars* VHD to come in a black caddy (which made it resemble a giant 3.5 in. floppy disk even more) with a relatively plain label of black text on a white background. Slipcover art came from Kazuhiko Sano's style A poster. This release also included an insert with the same art, this time in grayscale.



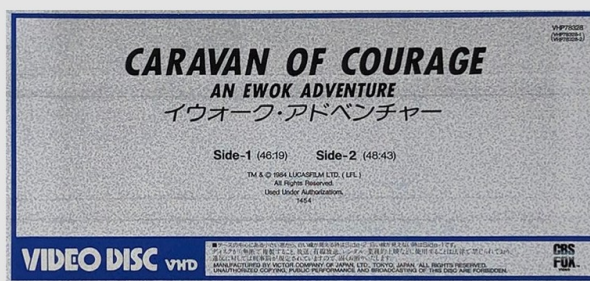
Caravan of Courage: An Ewok Adventure
(Japanese VHD, 1987)



Insert



Caddy



Caddy label

After 1987, VHD was considered obsolete, though discs would continue to be manufactured into the 1990s. Between that reality and the distribution rights for *The Battle for Endor* being tied up with MGM/UA Home Video instead of CBS/Fox Video, it is perhaps no surprise in

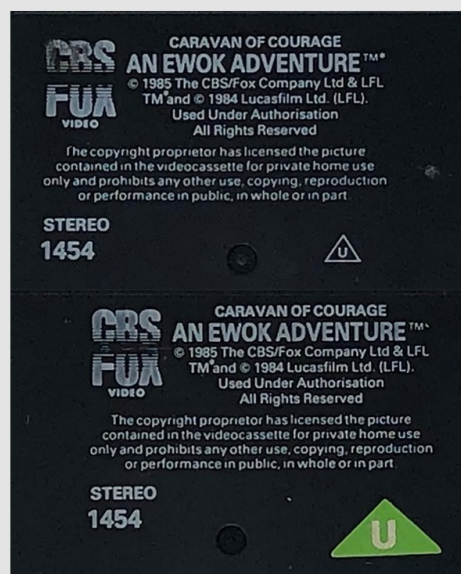
retrospect that this was the final *Star Wars* VHD on the Japanese market.¹³

Meanwhile in the United Kingdom (1985 – 1993)

The United Kingdom also saw releases of the Ewok telemovies on VHS (and in the case of the first film on Beta and Video 2000) prior to the American VHS and LaserDisc releases in 1990.



Caravan of Courage: An Ewok Adventure
(UK VHS, 1985)



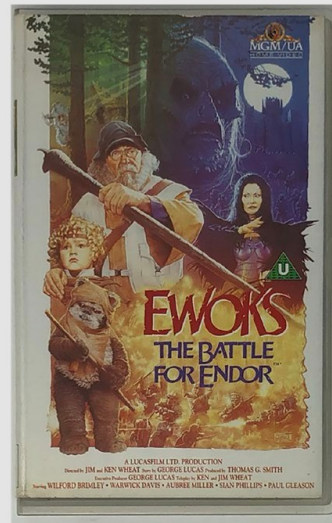
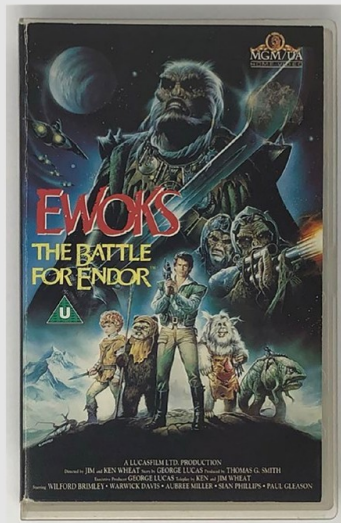
Cassette labels could bear the black and white rating or a green sticker.

Caravan of Courage: An Ewok Adventure was released through CBS/Fox Video in 1985. This UK release was similar to its Japanese LaserDisc counterpart in its use of the international style B poster artwork by Drew Struzan on the cover and its distribution through CBS/Fox Video. Given that this was in the era when the UK was transitioning between film rating

¹³ So the good news is that if you want to acquire a complete set of the Japanese *Star Wars* VHD releases, there are only five to collect: ANH; TESB; ROTJ; *Caravan of Courage*; and a behind-the-scenes double-feature. The *Original Trilogy* films were covered in the chapter *The Great Format War in Volume I*. We will investigate the double-feature in the chapter *Behind the Curtain* later in this volume. Unfortunately, the latter two are extremely rare, while the others aren't exactly common. That tends to make this a fairly expensive medium to collect, at least in terms of *Star Wars* products.

logos and color scheme (due to the Video Recordings Act in 1984), these can sometimes be found with green “U” rating symbol stickers placed over the original black and white, printed version of the rating). These were designed primarily for rental and used that era’s rental packaging design for CBS/Fox Video, which placed a CBS/Fox Video logo in the bottom left of the cover, within a wide, silvery-gray region across the bottom, where the name “CBS/FOX VIDEO” was repeated several times. The most amusing part of this release is likely its cover tagline: “Those heroes from *Return of the Jedi* are back...” (No, not our favorite heroes. The Ewoks!)

Ewoks: The Battle for Endor was released on VHS in the UK through MGM/UA Home Video, as in the U.S. and Japan, beginning in 1988 (the same year as the Japanese LaserDisc release). The first outing, intended primarily for rental, came in a large (rental) clamshell case with an interesting feature: the cover artwork slip was reversible. One side used the “exciting but arguably laughable” international style A poster art by Renato Casaro, similar to the Japanese LaserDisc release, while the other side used the American style A art by Randy Berrett, similar to the American VHS and LaserDisc releases.



Ewoks: The Battle for Endor (UK VHS, 1988) – both reversible covers shown

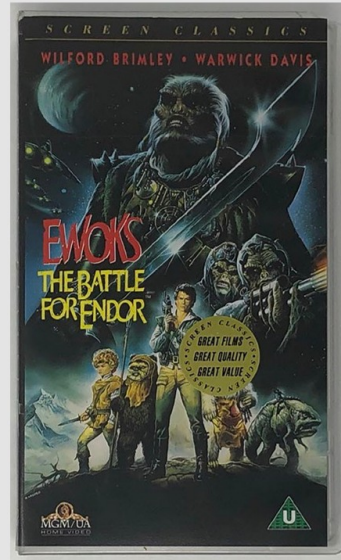
The second film was then reissued in 1990 (the same year as the American release) in a standard-sized clamshell case with the same Casaro artwork, now updated to include a new frame and branding as part of MGM/UA Home Video’s *The Box Office Collection*.

The Battle for Endor was then released one more time on VHS in 1993, using the same Casaro artwork but rebranded again to now fit the MGM/UA Home Video *Screen Classics* product line. That product line was advertised by stickers found on some copies of the film, which read, “Great

films. Great quality. Great value.”¹⁴



Ewoks: The Battle for Endor
(UK VHS, 1990)



Ewoks: The Battle for Endor
(UK VHS, 1993)

In 2004, both films were released by 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment on DVD as the *Ewok Adventures* double-feature. This double-feature was presented on one relatively uncommon double-sided or “flipper” DVD (i.e. a DVD with content on both sides that had to be flipped and which, due to this design, had no label except tiny print around the hole in the center). Each side included one of the telemovies. For this release, *Caravan of Courage: An Ewok Adventure* was referred to on menu screens as *Ewoks: Caravan of Courage*, yet another way of referring to the same telemovie. Unfortunately, the disc included no bonus features whatsoever.

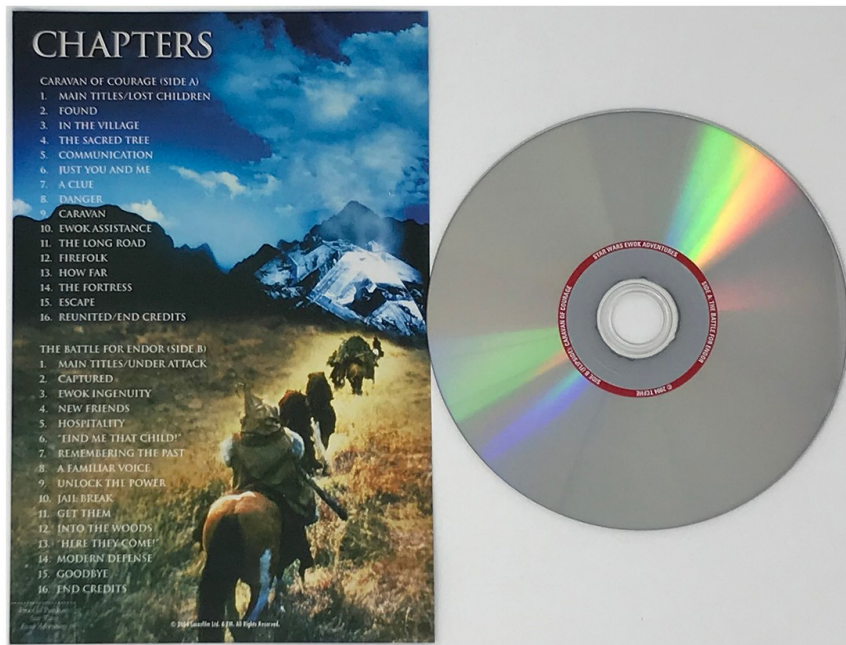
Cover artwork featured Cindel and Mace Towani with Wicket, Logray, and Weechee (I believe) on the left, while Wicket battles the mantigru (AKA condor dragon) to the right. Each special's title was listed near the bottom (with the first film as *Caravan of Courage*) above a section labeled

¹⁴ Some fans would likely argue that at least two out of three of those were debatable in this case, but I kind of dig the second Ewok telemovie. The quick news bytes on my first podcast, *ChronoRadio*, were even named after one of the characters. (“It’s time for Teek’s Ear News! It’s short, it’s to the point, and it’s often warm and fuzzy.”)

“Double Feature,” while the release’s title was included at the top. The insert featured the same three Ewoks (but no Towani kids) with the release and specials’ titles in similar locations to the cover. The reverse of the insert, which provided chapter listings, featured the eponymous “caravan” riding into the distance in the first telemovie.



Ewok Adventures double-feature (DVD, 2004) – packaging (left) and front of insert (right)



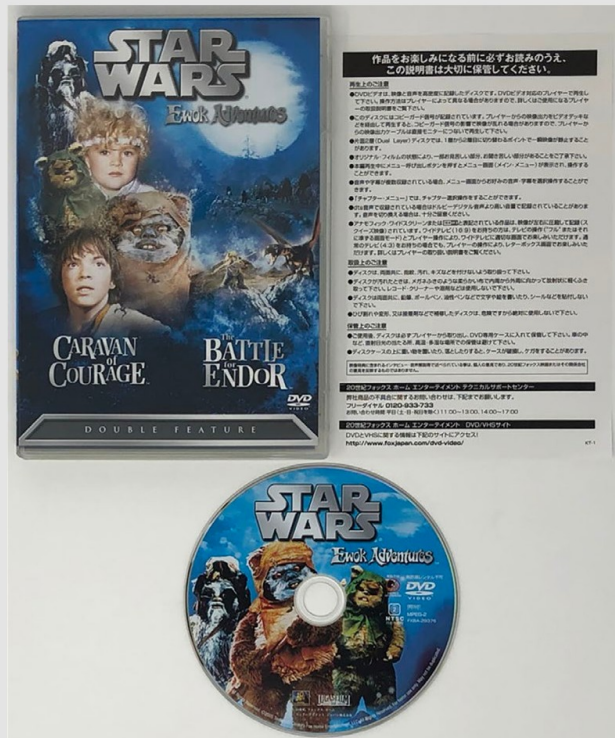
Ewok Adventures double-feature (DVD, 2004) – back of insert (left) and disc “label” (right)

The disc itself, while not having a standard label due to its nature as a “flipper” disc, did have a small, red “ring” label around its central area, which at least tried to note which “film” was on each side in white text. I say “tried” because the label incorrectly stated which was on each side, completely negating its usefulness.

Meanwhile in Japan (2005)

If there was one thing about the American *Ewok Adventures* DVD release (and, as we will see, the *Ewoks* and *Droids* releases from the same day) that rankled American fans, it was the use of double-sided, rather than double-layered DVDs. These were not the standard and generally considered to be a subpar means of providing content, even at the time. At least we could rest assured, though, that we were not alone in this frustration. If the American market, typically considered the “home” market for *Star Wars* releases, had such a poor design choice, surely other regions experienced the same.

Well... no, at least not everywhere. 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment *did* manage to “get it right” with label-bearing, dual-layered DVDs in other regions, just not in the U.S.



Ewok Adventures double-feature (Japanese DVD, 2005)



Interior

In Japan, these releases took another year to arrive (2005, rather than 2004), but when they did, each was a dual-layered DVD (Region 2, NTSC) that put both features on the same (only) side with a menu to choose which to watch. This allowed the discs to have proper labels, rather than tiny “ring” labels around the central hole. In the case of the *Ewok Adventures* release, this meant a label bearing artwork of Wicket, Logray, and another Ewok (possibly meant to be Weechee but colors seemed to be off), which resembled the front of the insert in the American release. (See, 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, was it that hard?)

The disc came in a clear DVD case without an insert, as there was no need for one. The imagery and information that American audiences received in the form of an insert was simply included on the interior side of the case artwork, which could be seen through the clear case.

More efficient packaging *and* better disc design? Maybe a year was worth the wait...

Meanwhile in Spain (2007)

One thing that we have not really seen with *Star Wars* products on the American market has been releases that combine *Star Wars* with non-*Star Wars* content. In fact, barring things like the *AFI Life Achievement Award* sets for George Lucas and John Williams or decades-spanning sets like the *AFI Century Collection* or *20th Century Fox 75th Anniversary Collection*, we really haven’t seen that at all. By contrast, one of the most well-known parodies of *Star Wars*, Mel Brooks’ *Spaceballs*, has been released numerous times in

packages that included other films, usually with the same director (Mel Brooks) or actor (John Candy as Barf).¹⁵

That makes it all the more interesting when we *do* see this type of product for a *Star Wars* release. Three years after we began seeing releases of the *Ewok Adventures* double-feature DVD in various regions, 2007 saw the release of an unusual product in Spain. This was a DVD package that included three films: both of the Ewok telemovies and...

Willow.



Ewok Adventures and *Willow* (Spanish DVD, 2007)

Yes, on the Spanish market (which is currently rife with bootlegs, though this particular release was indeed legitimate) there was a single DVD release that included *Caravan of Courage*, *The Battle for Endor*, and that other George Lucas fantasy film (with story by Lucas, screenplay by Bob Dolman, and directed by Ron Howard, who would eventually come aboard late in production as the final director of *Solo: A Star Wars Story*).

¹⁵ I actually collect *Spaceballs* releases as part of my *Star Wars* home video collection, as do many other collectors, but that film is not within the purview of this guide. Heck, it has so many releases and reissues that it could merit its own small book. (No, I'm not going to write one!)

Released in theaters in 1988, *Willow* had made its DVD premiere in a so-called *Special Edition* DVD release in 1991. The Spanish version of that *Willow* DVD was reissued in this unusual package.

It was the *Ewok Adventures* disc, however, that really stood out in this package in similar fashion to the release we've seen from Japan. This Spanish DVD was dual-layer, single-sided, and had a full label with the same artwork as the Japanese release.

Unfortunately, this was a Region 2 PAL release, making it an interesting item for American *Star Wars* home video collectors but not one that would likely see much practical use.

For a More Digital Age (2021)

17 years after their last release on home media in America, the *Ewok* telemovies finally reemerged by joining Disney+ on Apr. 2, 2021, as part of the saga's *Vintage* collection. Each included a 1 min. clip of a seemingly random scene from within the telemovie within that film's "extras" section.

In Trouble Again (1990 – 2004)

The next new *Star Wars* fiction to hit the airwaves on ABC was a pair of cartoon series from Nelvana Ltd. (the same company that had produced *The Story of the Faithful Wookiee* for *The Star Wars Holiday Special*): *Droids: The Adventures of R2-D2 and C-3PO* and *Ewoks*.

Droids followed R2-D2 and C-3PO through thirteen episodes (Sept. 7 – Nov. 30, 1985) and one special, "The Great Heep" (June 7, 1986). For the regular episodes, stories were primarily divided into four-episode arcs, each with a different owner for the droids. The ninth episode, "Coby and the Starhunters," was unusual in that it acted as a sort of epilogue to the second arc's four previous episodes. (For that matter, "The Great Heep" was essentially a prologue for the final arc, set between "Coby and the Starhunters" and "Tail of the Roon Comets," even though it aired months after the end of that last arc.)

For American *Star Wars* fans, *Droids* has been almost as much a frustration in the years since its airing as *The Star Wars Holiday Special*, though not nearly as reviled. Even 35 years after leaving the airwaves, *Droids* has never gotten a proper series release on physical media in the United States. Instead, it has gotten a few partial releases, often with episodes edited together in blocks of four (full arcs) to create makeshift films.

The first attempts at releasing *Droids* on home video in the U.S. came in

1990 through J2 Communications¹⁶, under the banner of *The Star Wars Trilogy Animated Collection*. The entire series (minus one episode) had already been released in the United Kingdom in 1988 (see sidebar), but none had been released yet for the American market. Seemingly unsure about what approach to pursue, J2 released three VHS cassettes of *Droids* material, though their differences would make one assume that they were trying to launch two product lines, or to launch one eventual product line and wanted to test the waters first.

One cassette was released that included a single episode, “The Lost Prince,” the first episode of the show’s second arc (the fifth overall). This release was most easily recognized by its white, standard VHS case. Even for its time, one half-hour episode, without commercials, was a bit skimpy for a retail release.

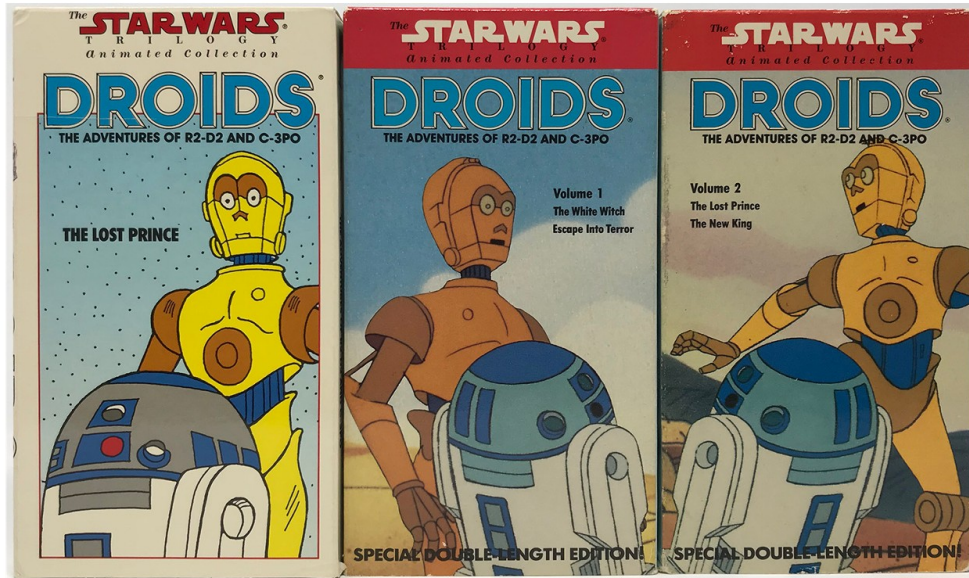
The other two releases avoided that issue by including two episodes each. As such, they were dubbed *Special Double-Length Editions* on their packaging. The first, *Droids, Vol. 1*, included the episodes “The White Witch” and “Escape Into Terror,” the first two episodes of both the series and its first arc. Logic would seem to dictate that the second volume should have included the episodes “The Trigon Unleashed” and “A Race to the Finish” (featuring Boba Fett) to finish that story arc, but that was not the case. Instead, *Droids, Vol. 2* included “The Lost Prince” (again) and “The New King,” the first two episodes of the *second* arc (episodes five and six overall). These releases were most easily recognized by a red band along the top proclaiming them to be part of *The Star Wars Trilogy Animated Collection* and by their blue, rather than white, packaging scheme on sides and back.

All three included the full name of the series (*Droids: The Adventures of R2-D2 and C-3PO*) at the top of case artwork, and artwork was always the titular droids in slightly different poses. Each also noted its included episodes alongside the droids over the main artwork, and each of the two-episode releases also noted their volume number directly above the episode titles. One other area of differentiation came in terms of borders. Whereas the white color scheme of the single-episode release included a white border for the cover art, the blue color scheme for the double-episode releases primarily factored into the backgrounds for the spines and back, while the front covers did not include a colored border at all.

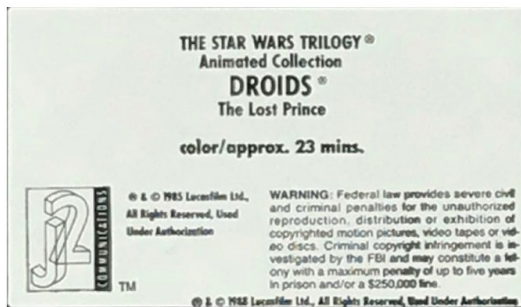
Cassettes bore extremely simple, black and white labels with the expected information and legalese, along with a J2 Communications logo.

¹⁶ Another Disney connection: J2 Communications was founded by James P. Jimirro, who had been founding president of the Disney Channel in 1983.

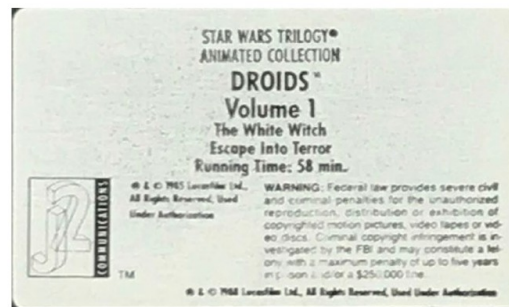
To make this a bit stranger, all three cassettes included a trailer for the product line, but whereas the trailer on the double-length cassettes showed them and their double-length *Evoks* counterparts, the preview on the single-episode cassette promoted the double-length releases but actually *showed* the single-episode releases.



Droids releases from J2 Communications (VHS, 1990)
Left to right: single-episode release; *Special Double-Length Edition, Vol. 1*; and *Special Double-Length Edition, Vol. 2*



Single-episode cassette label

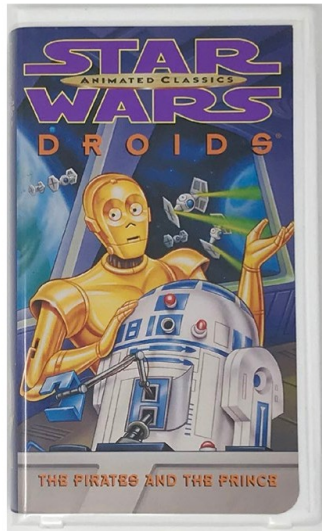


Double-episode cassette label (*Vol. 1*)

So, to recap because this was just too ridiculous not to restate: J2 Communications released two different types of *Droids* cassettes but seem to have gotten them confused in their own advertising. They had the chance to release five episodes, but by repeating one, they released only four. They also had the chance to release an entire arc of the series when presenting two back-to-back volumes but instead released the first halves of two different arcs. Even before episodes started to be edited into “feature-length” releases, *Droids* was not off to a good start.

Seven years later, with the *Special Editions* reigniting interest in *Star Wars* for mainstream audiences, 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment released

a new pair of *Droids* and *Ewoks* VHS cassettes, labeled as *Star Wars Animated Classics*. In each case, four episodes were rescored (i.e. had music redone) and edited together with a small amount of footage added and/or removed to create a “feature-length” tale that ran about 90 min. In the case of *Droids*, it was the second arc (“The Lost Prince,” “The New King,” “The Pirates of Tarnooga,” and “The Revenge of Kybo Ren”¹⁷) that was edited together to become the feature-length *The Pirates and the Prince*.¹⁸



*Star Wars Animated Classics: Droids:
The Pirates and the Prince* (VHS, 1997)



Label

Fortunately, *Droids* was already designed to run in arcs, so the episodes worked well together.¹⁹ The release was also relatively kid-friendly in its packaging, arriving in a white clamshell case. Cover art featured C-3PO and R2-D2 aboard a ship with TIE fighters blasting in space behind them. A purple and gold *Star Wars Animated Classics* logo with an orange *Droids* label

¹⁷ No, not *Kylo Ren*. This was *Gir Kybo Ren-Cha*, a pirate, whose name was likely an inspiration for Lawrence Kasdan, J.J. Abrams, and Michael Arndt when writing TFA.

¹⁸ This was not to be confused with the similarly named second volume of the UK's 1988 *Droids* releases, which contained the arc in its original, four-episode format.

¹⁹ I would note, however, that subjecting anyone to 90 min. straight of *Droids* would strain any friendship.

beneath it dominated the top of the case, while the title of the story within, *The Pirates and the Prince*, appeared in orange along the bottom.

The cassette itself bore the blue, green, and white label scheme of the 1992 and 1995 VHS film releases.

Changes for Better and/or Worse:

***Droids: The Pirates and the Prince* (1997)**

All episodes in the feature-length *The Pirates and the Prince* have been rescored, and their opening sequences and end credits have been removed. Beyond that, changes affect all but one of the four episodes.

“The Lost Prince”

The first establishing shot of Tyne’s Horky from “The Lost Prince” has been replaced by a more generic establishing shot with credits running over it.

A new line is added near the end: “We need help getting that bucket of bolts up and running so we can take this prince back to become a king,” spoken by Uncle Gundy before he kicks R2-D2. In response to this assault, R2-D2 (as in the original release) runs over Gundy’s hat. In the original release, the droid is admonished to behave himself, then C-3PO’s leg starts acting up, causing him to jump around like an idiot while Gundy laughs. In the feature-length version, R2-D2 is still told to behave, but C-3PO’s slapstick is (thankfully?) removed.²⁰

“The New King”

Ko Zatec-Cha loses some redundancy, as a piece of his dialogue (“I have spies! Spies that will finish you for good!”) is condensed (“I have spies that will finish you for good!”).

At the end of the episode as originally aired, Jessica Meade references how someone still owes her for the flight to Tammuz-an. As aired, this moves into a celebration of Mon Julpa’s ascension to the throne, at which C-3PO and R2-D2 wear medals and save the day once again by stopping some silverware thieves. That scene is entirely cut in the feature-length film. In its place, the scene with Jessica is extended to include new dialogue from Mon Julpa that sets up the next episode: “Excellent! I have need of your piloting skills, and Jann will fly as escort to repay his debt to you.”

²⁰ I have to put a question mark on this because a completist rarely likes to see things removed, even if they are straight-up stupid.

“The Pirates of Tarnooga”

In “The Pirates of Tarnooga,” a commercial break transition is smoothed over after Jann Tosh and the droids go overboard from a skiff. Originally, their fall is followed by Jessica crying “No!” and Kybo Ren-Cha stating that “No one escapes.” This leads into a commercial with a final shot of the water where they fell, then returns from commercial break with an establishing shot of the area. The feature-length version cuts Kybo Ren-Cha’s line, moves directly from the droids falling into the water to the shot immediately after the post-commercial establishing shot, and moves Jessica’s line to be heard over the first post-commercial footage.

The last scene of the original episode is missing completely, in which Jann, Jessica, and Mon Julpa explain the decoy plan that worked against Gir Kybo Ren-Cha. Like with “The New King,” this appears to have been cut in order to add to the prior scene for a cleaner transition between episodes. That previous scene originally ended with a shot of the R-22 Spearhead (similar to an A-wing) flying away and C-3PO asking, “Decoys? We were not the decoys, were we, sir?” In the feature-length version, we now see C-3PO in the cockpit as he delivers his line, then there is added dialogue from Mon Julpa on the communication screen: “My friends, I have a great project for you. I need help negotiating a peace treaty with Lord Toda. Proceed with all speed to the royal castle.” The last sentence is delivered over the same starfighter shot used for C-3PO’s line in the original version.

“The Revenge of Kybo Ren”

Strangely, “The Revenge of Kybo Ren” is essentially unchanged, the only episode in *The Pirates and the Prince* to make it through unscathed.

The next major release (and revision) of the *Original Trilogy* came in 2004 with the trilogy’s first DVD release. On Nov. 23, 2004, two months after the *Original Trilogy* DVD release, another *Droids* home video product arrived, also on DVD from 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment. Billed this time as *Star Wars Animated Adventures*²¹, one side of this double-sided (“flipper”) DVD included 1997’s *The Pirates and the Prince* again, while the reverse included the final four-episode arc (“Tail of the Roon Comets,”

²¹ So they were part of a “collection” in 1990, considered “classics” in 1997, and then “adventures” in 2004. I’m not sure if that differentiation of titles alleviates confusion or just causes more!

“The Roon Games,” “Across the Roon Sea,” and “The Frozen Citadel”)²² edited together into the film *Treasure of the Hidden Planet*.

Cover and insert artwork featured new art of characters from both arcs (though mostly *The Pirates and the Prince*). The release’s title was listed at the top with a *Star Wars Animated Adventures* in the center and *Droids* to its lower right. The bottom region, like with the *Ewok Adventures* DVD of the same day, noted this as a double feature. The disc itself, while not having a standard label due to its nature as a “flipper” disc, did have a small, red “ring” label around its central area, which noted which “film” was on each side in white text.



Star Wars Animated Adventures: Droids double-feature (DVD, 2004) – packaging (left) and front of insert (right)

²² This was the arc known as *Uncharted Space* for the 1988 UK releases.



Back of insert (left) and disc “label” (right)

Changes for Better and/or Worse:

Droids: Treasure of the Hidden Planet (2004)

The four episodes have been combined and rescored, requiring that their opening sequences and end credits have been removed. Otherwise, only one of the episodes is slightly altered.

“Tail of the Roon Comets”

“Tail of the Roon Comets” is given a new opening narration by Mungo Baobab (voiced by ILM effects artist Alex Lindsay, rather than the original Mungo voice actor, Winston Rekert). What makes the new introduction interesting is that since he actually met the droids in “The Great Heep,” much of the footage running with his narration is from that special.

Another change alters a line's meaning. In the original version, Mungo exclaims, “I’ve found it! I’ll establish a trade route for the Baobab Merchant Fleet yet!” C-3PO replies that he still has a bad feeling about it, but maybe the surprises are over now. Mungo says, “Maybe they are,” then asks C-3PO to get their astrogation charts. When C-3PO opens the compartment where they are kept, a bunch of furry mupples (think *Star Trek*’s tribbles) fall on him. Laughing, Mungo states, “Then again, maybe not,” referring to the surprises not being over yet.

In the feature-length version, C-3PO’s lines about his bad feeling and the surprises being over are completely removed, but the rest of the scene plays out normally, so that Mungo’s “Then again, maybe not,” has nothing to refer back to except for C-3PO’s assertion that the astrogation charts are

in the compartment he chooses. The line now seems to equate to “maybe the astrologation charts weren’t in that particular compartment.” It is a subtle and nonsensical change.

During the *Star Wars* Celebration VI convention in 2012 there was talk of making all episodes of *Droids* and *Ewoks* available to stream via the official *Star Wars* website, but nothing ever came of it.²³ Thanks to the relatively low number and repeated episodes of *Droids* home video releases, fans in the U.S. still have no official way of owning the entire series. To date, three regular episodes (“The Trigon Unleashed,” “A Race to the Finish,” and “Coby and the Starhunters”) and the special (“The Great Heep”), one-third of the entire series, have never seen physical home video release in America. Thankfully, Disney+ has filled that void for viewing, if not for owning, as of 2021.

Meanwhile in the United Kingdom (1988)

While *Droids* has been mostly neglected in the United States, CBS/Fox Video treated the United Kingdom to a more thorough VHS release. Three regular volumes of *Droids* were released in the UK in 1988, each including a full, four-episode arc (as *The Battle Against Sise Fromm*, *The Pirates and the Prince*, and *Uncharted Space*). “The Great Heep” also received an unnumbered release in the series. Unfortunately, given the limitations of VHS capacity, one episode had to be dropped for this series “set,” so it was the odd epilogue episode, “Coby and the Starhunters,” that was left out.

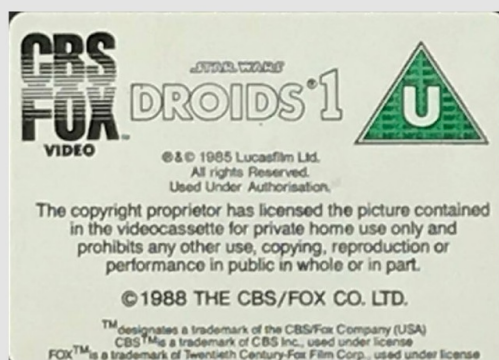
Each of the numbered volumes featured red-bordered cover art with the title of the series (in this case as *Star Wars: Droids*) followed by the volume number, an image from the show (with the UK rating symbol near the top), and a section at the bottom that named that volume, listed its episodes, and included the CBS/Fox Video logo. Strangely, while the bottom region with story names was just text over the main cover image for the second and third volumes (as we will also see for all volumes of *Ewoks*), the first volume cut off the cover art a bit higher so that the title region was within the red border of the case design. Since “The Great Heep” was not a

²³ I actually remember exactly where I was when I heard that via SiriusXM satellite radio’s *Star Wars* Celebration station. That kind of news sticks with you... then becomes a lingering scar of disappointment. Healing only came nearly a decade later with the Disney+ release of the series.

numbered volume, it varied a bit more from the norm. Its main title, “The Great Heep,” was centered at the top with the UK rating to its lower right and the *Star Wars: Droids* logo to its upper left inside the red border area. Since this was all a single episode, the bottom area included the CBS/Fox Video logo without the need for any titles.



Droids (UK VHS, 1988) – Left to right: *The Battle Against Sise Fromm*; *The Pirates and the Prince*; *Uncharted Space*; *The Great Heep*



Numbered volume label



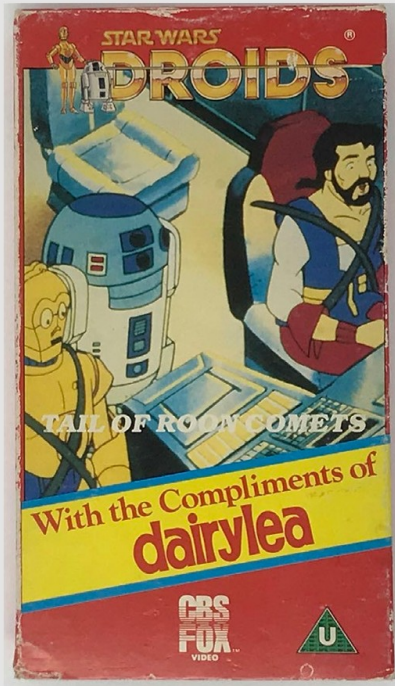
The Great Heep (unnumbered) label

Cassette labels were fairly simple, black and white (except for the color UK rating symbol) affairs with a CBS/Fox Video logo. Numbered volumes used only *Star Wars: Droids* and the volume number, rather than including their titles, while the label for “The Great Heep” included only that name, without ever mentioning *Star Wars: Droids* as its series at all.

British cheese spread company Dairylea (in conjunction with CBS/Fox Video) also released a special mail-away VHS cassette that included a single episode. Unfortunately, instead of “Coby and the Starhunters,” which would have meant that the UK had a full run of *Droids* on VHS, the episode included was the first of the final arc, “Tail of the Roon Comets,” which was already found on *Uncharted Space*.

Cover art used the same image of Mungo and the droids as *Uncharted*

Space (which included that episode) with the episode title across the midsection above a “With the Compliments of Dairylea” banner (a rather garish mess of red text on a yellow background with a blue border), which itself was over the CBS/Fox Video logo and UK rating. The cassette label was relatively plain: a black and white label (except for a color rating symbol) with the series title, episode title, and “With the Compliment of Dairylea” line again.



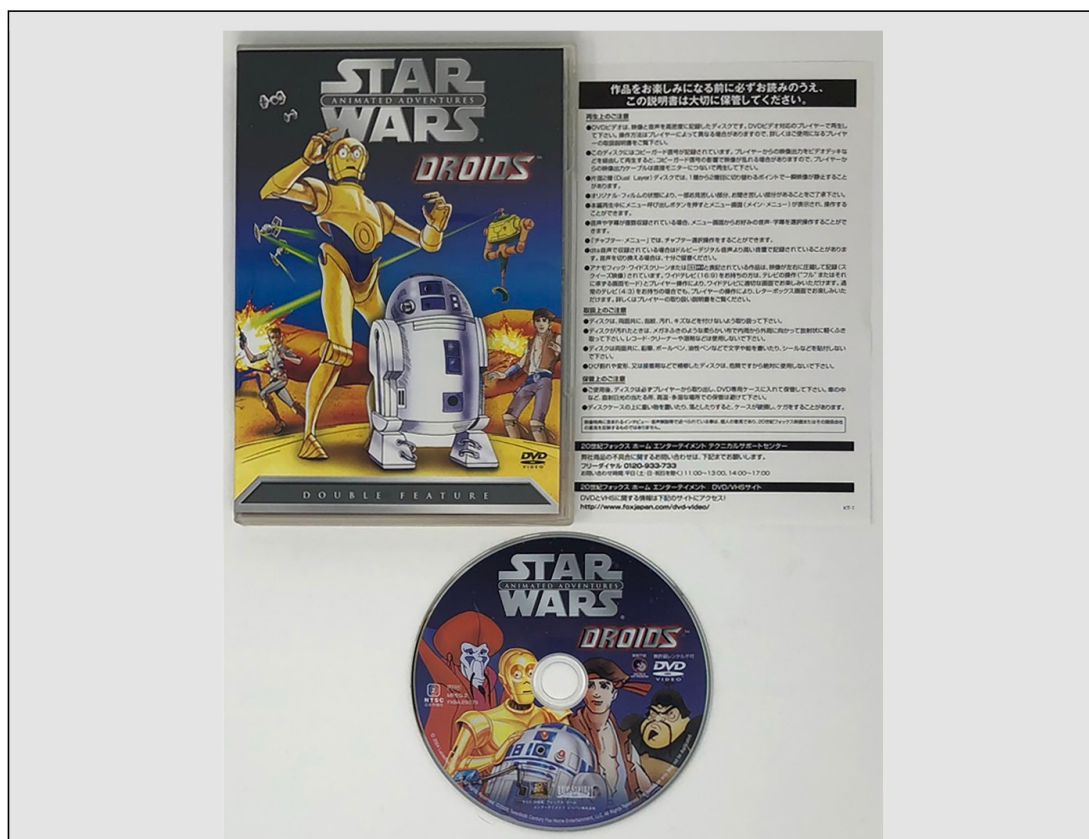
Droids: Tail of the Roon Comets
Dairylea mail-away
(UK VHS, 1988)



Label

Meanwhile in Japan (2005)

Just like with the *Ewok Adventures* double-feature, the Japanese (Region 2, NTSC) release of the *Droids* double-feature DVD “corrected” the frustrating double-sided nature of the American release by instead providing a dual-layer, single-sided disc that included both “movies.” This allowed the disc to have a full label, featuring Ko Zatec-Cha, C-3PO, R2-D2, Jann Tosh, and Gir Kybo Ren-Cha. Also like the telemovie package, the disc case was clear, allowing the content Americans found on a paper insert to be included on the interior side of the case art, visible through the case.



Star Wars Animated Adventures: Droids double-feature (Japanese DVD, 2005)



Interior

I ask again, 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment: Was it really *that* hard to get it right?

For a More Digital Age (2021)

36 years after the last regular episode of *Droids* aired on ABC, 35 years

after the special airing of “The Great Heep,” and 31 years after the last time individual episodes of the series were released on physical media in the United States, all of *Droids* returned to the spotlight as individual episodes when added to Disney+ on June 18, 2021, as part of the saga’s *Vintage* collection.²⁴ No extras were included.

The Theme Song That Will Haunt Your Nightmares (1990 – 2004)

Ewoks fared either decidedly better or dreadfully worse than *Droids* on television. Whereas *Droids* presented content that was mostly recognizable as *Star Wars* to casual viewers, *Ewoks* (Sept. 7, 1985 – Dec. 13, 1986) went with a more “kiddie” approach, focusing heavily on magic and misadventure on the forest moon of Endor with a group of young Ewoks: Wicket W. Warrick; Kneesaa a Jari Kintaka; Latara; and Teebo. Their adventures tended to be self-contained episodes, though character development did emerge from time to time to suggest at least a very light overall plan at work. Perhaps owing to having an appeal beyond just the target audience for *Star Wars*, *Ewoks* managed to secure a second season, while *Droids* died off after only one (with “The Great Heep” being broadcast later).

For its second season, *Ewoks* was drastically reworked into a show that was still recognizable as *Ewoks* but had the feel of an entirely different series. (It was usually promoted as *The All-New Ewoks*, though that title was not on the episodes themselves.) The transition was quite jarring. Some characters, such as Wicket’s father Deej, were notably absent in the second season, while others were altered substantially. Wicket went from being a child with a heart of gold to an arrogant, smart-mouthed punk. Teebo changed from being a wise-beyond-his-years apprentice of shaman Logray to being a bumbling idiot so gaga over Latara that his heart would *literally* beat out of his chest (*Looney Tunes* style) upon seeing her. For her part, the Latara of the first season had been in love with Teebo and fawning over him, but he had been oblivious to her affection. Now, she was a self-centered snot who knew of Teebo’s affections for her (the reverse of before) and constantly used those affections to manipulate him. Add in the splitting of the half-hour time slot into two half-length stories for nine of the thirteen half-hour episodes of the season, and you had a recipe for

²⁴ No explanation was given as to why these did not join Disney+ when the *Vintage* collection launched with *Ewoks* and other material, but at least this made for a fun surprise for Father’s Day weekend 2021.

disaster.

Unfortunately, like *Droids*, *Ewoks* has seen only limited releases on physical home media, generally mirroring that of *Droids*. Fortunately, *none* of those releases have included episodes from the second season, which spared future generations from that particular hovertrain wreck... until the full series arrived on Disney+ in 2021 to torment kids anew.

J2 Communications released three VHS cassettes for *Ewoks* in 1990 under the banner of *The Star Wars Trilogy Animated Collection*. As with *Droids*, one (in a white VHS case) was a single-episode release, while the other two (this time in yellow themed cases) were *Special Double-Length Editions* with two episodes each. The single-episode release was “The Tree of Light” (the sixth episode of the series). Strangely, there appears to have been a mix-up during production, as many of these cassettes mistakenly bore a variant of the label of the first of the *double-length* cassettes, declaring the tape to contain a second episode that was nowhere to be found. These incorrect labels (showing *Vol. 1* of the double-length edition but found on a single-episode cassette) aligned the title information along the left side of the label, while the actual label for the first double-length edition (found correctly on those *Vol. 1* cassettes) centered that text. It was an odd error indeed.

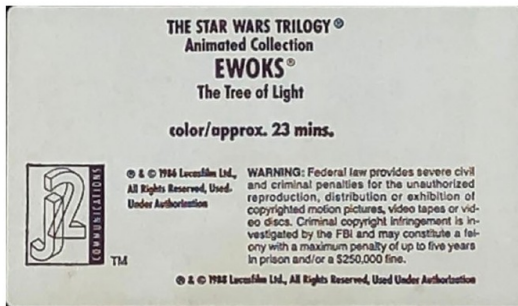


Ewoks releases from J2 Communications (VHS, 1990)
Left to right: single-episode release; *Special Double-Length Edition, Vol. 1*; and *Special Double-Length Edition, Vol. 2*

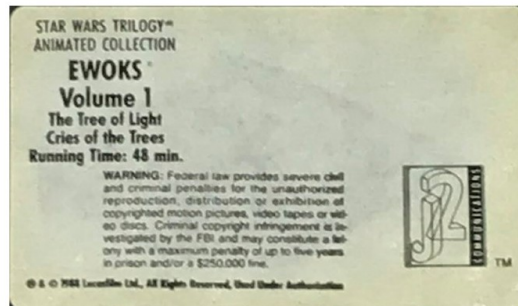
Like *Droids*, the single-episode release framed its cover art in a white border, while the double-episode releases did not use a border at all on the front but allowed their own yellow color scheme to dominate the back and sides of each case. Titles were listed within the cover artwork beneath the

Ewoks logo, this time in white text instead of black. Rather than using the same two characters on each cover as *Droids* had, however, each instead featured a different pair of Ewoks: Wicket with Kneesaa on the single-episode release; Zephee with Mookie on the first double-episode release; and Latara with an infant (“wokling”) on the second double-episode release. Labels were similar to the simple, black and white style of J2 Communications’ *Droids* releases.

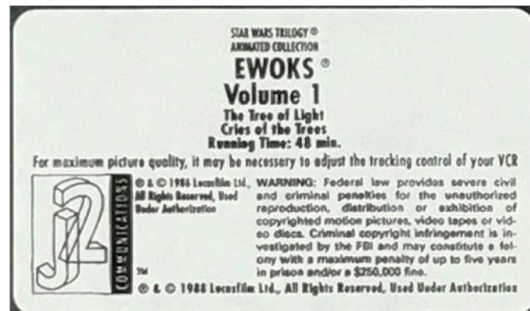
Ewoks, Vol. 1, the first of the two double-length releases, included the episodes “Cries of the Trees” (the first episode of the series) and “The Tree of Light” (again). *Ewoks, Vol. 2* included the episodes “The Haunted Village” and “Blue Harvest” (the second and twelfth episodes, respectively). Since *Ewoks* was not divided into arcs, having episodes released in this strange order did not hinder viewing, though it was certainly a tad bizarre. (For those curious, the odd trailer for the product line was also on the cassettes, and the packaging confusion was identical to that for *Droids*.)



Correct single-episode label found on what appears to be a minority of copies



Incorrect label found on many single-episode copies (note left alignment)



Correct label from double-length *Vol. 1* (note centered titles, not left-aligned)

In 1997, 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment released the *Star Wars Animated Classics* on VHS. The *Ewoks* entry, which arrived in a similar white clamshell case to its *Droids* counterpart, included the feature-length *The Haunted Village*, composed of rescored episodes “The Haunted Village” (the individual episode), “Cries of the Trees,” “Rampage of the Phlogs,” and “Sunstar vs. Shadowstone.” These were the second, first, third, and ninth episodes, respectively, presented in that order, with the opening of “Sunstar

vs. Shadowstone” moved to the beginning of the tale so that the episode’s conflict could essentially bookend the “movie.”

Changes for Better and/or Worse:

***Ewoks: The Haunted Village* (1997)**

All episodes in the feature-length *The Haunted Village* have been rescored, and their opening sequences and end credits have been removed. Beyond that, changes are limited mostly to a single episode.

“Cries of the Trees”

Morag’s maniacal laugh after capturing Izrina has been removed.

In the same episode, a new establishing shot of the forest on fire is added after Chief Chirpa tells the others to “prepare the defenses.”

A scene with the Ewoks celebrating in the rain after their victory is completely cut, so that the episode ends instead with Morag doused with water.

“Sunstar vs. Shadowstone”

The opening of the episode has been sliced off and placed at the beginning of the episode “The Haunted Village” for this feature-length *The Haunted Village*.²⁵

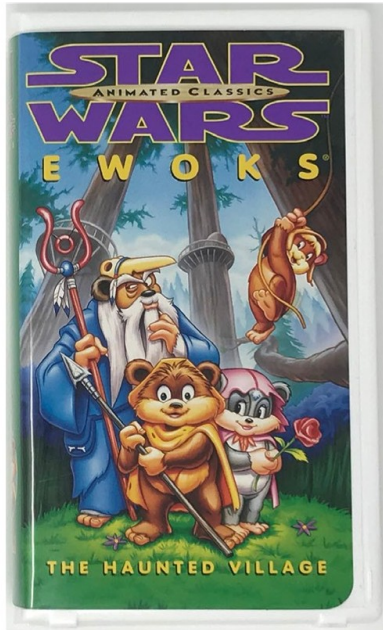
The reversal of “The Haunted Village” and “Cries of the Trees” corrected a continuity error in the original airing order. The Duloks complain about needing bug repellant in “The Haunted Village” and receive it in “Cries of the Trees,” which did not make sense in the original airing order that put “Cries of the Trees” first. However, the rearranged episodes also *created* a new continuity error, as Malani (Teebo’s younger sister) is now shown getting her hood (an important rite of passage) in “Cries of the Trees” after already being seen with her hood earlier in the feature-length tale, during “The Haunted Village.”²⁶

Cover art for this first attempt at an animated *Ewok* “film” featured new art of Wicket, Kneesaa, Teebo, and Logray. A purple and gold *Star Wars*

²⁵ That repeated title makes discussing the episode and feature-length program together in a single segment rather mind-bending.

²⁶ Yes, the exact same pair of episodes whose reversal *fixed* the insect repellant continuity issue *created* the hood continuity issue.

Animated Classics logo with a yellow *Ewoks* label beneath it dominated the top of the case, while the title of the story within, *The Haunted Village*, appeared in yellow along the bottom. Like its *Droids* counterpart, the cassette itself bore the blue, green, and white label scheme of the 1992 and 1995 VHS film releases.



*Star Wars Animated Classics: Ewoks:
The Haunted Village* (VHS, 1997)



Label

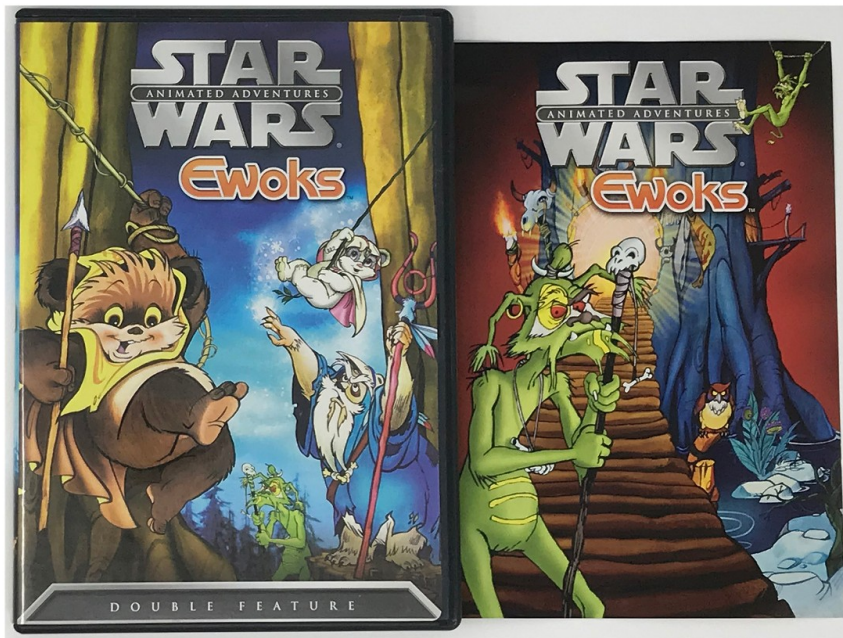
The last physical *Ewoks* animated release to date came as a *Star Wars Animated Adventures* double-feature on DVD on Nov. 23, 2004, from 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment. This release came in the form of a double-sided (“flipper”) DVD that included *The Haunted Village* (1997) on one side and a new feature-length program, *Tales from the Endor Woods*, on the other. *Tales from the Endor Woods* mixed up the episodes it edited together like *The Haunted Village*, but it also provided a new narration from an older Wicket to tie the four mostly unrelated episodes together that the previous “feature” lacked. (The voice actor portraying the older Wicket was actually ILM digital effects artist Alex Lindsay, the same man who voiced Mungo Baobab’s new prologue in *Droids: Treasure of the Hidden Planet*.) The episodes included were “Wicket’s Wagon” (episode ten), “The Traveling Jindas” (episode five), “To Save Deej” (episode four), and “Asha” (episode thirteen, the first season’s finale).

Changes for Better and/or Worse:

***Ewoks: Tales from the Endor Woods* (2004)**

Fortunately, with the exception of adding Wicket’s new narration, these

episodes were mostly untouched aside from being combined, rescored, and losing their typical opening sequences and credits.



Star Wars Animated Adventures: Ewoks double-feature (DVD, 2004) – packaging (left) and front of insert (right)



Back of insert (left) and disc “label” (right)

Cover artwork featured Wicket, Kneesaa, Logray, and Umwak (the Dulok shaman), while Umwak featured prominently on the front of the insert and Wicket appeared on the back (i.e. chapter listing side) of the

insert. Similar to its two companion releases for *Droids* and the *Ewok Adventures*, a lower area noted this as a double feature. Similar to *Droids*, the primary logo at top center was the *Star Wars Animated Adventures* symbol, while *Ewoks* appeared to its lower right (albeit a bit more prominently to my eyes than that of *Droids*). The disc itself, while not having a standard label due to its nature as a “flipper” disc, did have a small, red “ring” label around its central area, which noted which “film” was on each side in white text, similar to its *Droids* counterpart.

As with *Droids*, it is important to take stock of just how much of *Ewoks* remains unreleased on physical media in the U.S. If one counts each of the episodes from season two that had two stories in them as just a single half-hour episode each, there are sixteen episodes of *Ewoks* (three from the first season and all of the second) that have never seen physical home video release in America. That’s over 60% of the series!

Meanwhile in the United Kingdom (1988)

Just like with *Droids*, CBS/Fox Video released an almost complete run of *Ewoks* on VHS in the United Kingdom in 1988. Episodes were ridiculously out of order on cassettes of four episodes each, divided by theme.

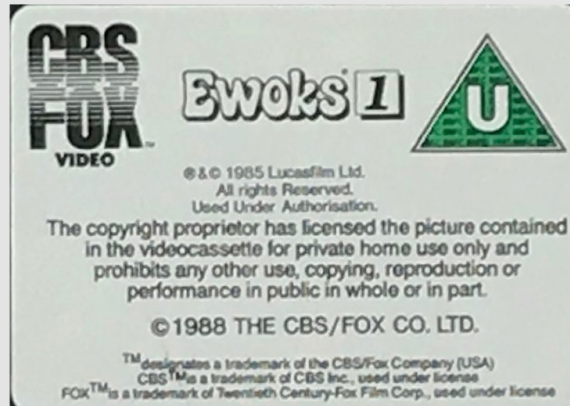


Ewoks first season releases (UK VHS, 1988) – Left to right: *Morag's Revenge*, *The Gupins and the Jindas*, *Wicket the Hero*

The first season was split across three volumes, entitled *Morag's Revenge*, *The Gupins and the Jindas*, and *Wicket the Hero*. Due to content limitations for VHS, the eleventh episode, “The Three Lessons,” was left out.

For those curious about the extreme shuffling of episodes for these

releases, episodes were divided as follows: the first volume included episodes 2, 1, 3, and 9 (the same as those in the later *The Haunted Village* “movie” version but in their original form); the second volume included episodes 4, 8, 5, and 7 (keeping both Jindas episodes together); and the third volume included episodes 10, 6, 13, and 12.



Label

The second season was also spread across three volumes by theme. *Ewoks, Vol. 4* and *5* collected the episodes that were split into two shorter stories each, while *Ewoks, Vol. 6* included episodes that each contained a single, full-length story. These volumes were labeled *Wicket's Adventures as He Becomes a Warrior*, *Wicket's [sic] Adventures* (yes, with two T's; spelling and grammatical issues were commonplace on these releases), and *Battle for the Planet Endor*.²⁷ Again, one episode had to be dropped for space, leaving the ninth episode, including the stories “Prow Beaten” and “Baga's Rival,” behind.

²⁷ Obviously, *Ewoks: Battle for the Planet Endor* was not to be confused with *Ewoks: The Battle for Endor*. Also obviously, though apparently not to the producers of these releases, both were referring to the forest moon of Endor, not Endor itself, making the animated title erroneous.

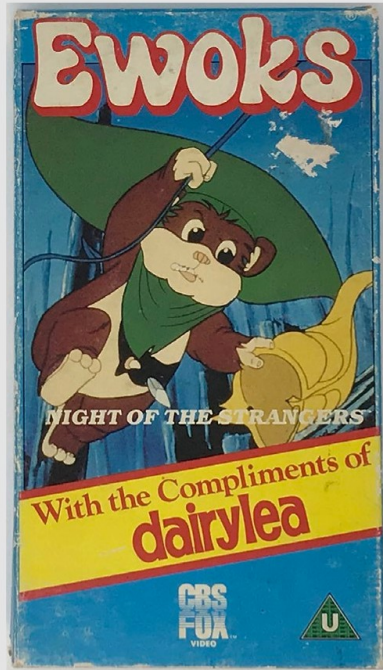


Ewoks second season releases (UK VHS, 1988) – Left to right: *Wicket's Adventures as He Becomes a Warrior*; *Wicket's Adventures*; *Battle for the Planet Endor*

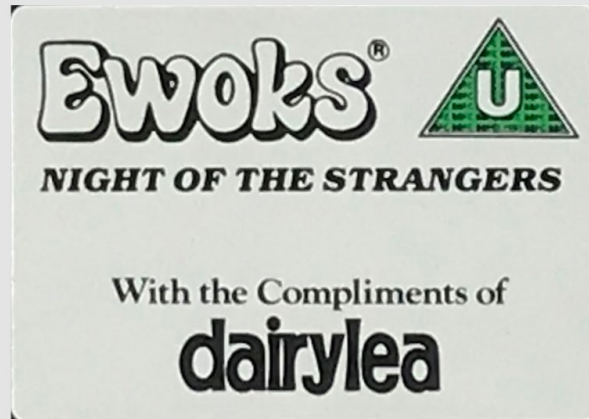
For those wondering about how mixed up the episode order was for this set of releases, episodes from the second season were divided as follows (treating episodes with two stories as a single episode): the fourth volume included episodes 1, 4, 10, and 11; the fifth volume included episodes 2, 6, 13, and 7; and the final volume included episodes 12, 8, 3, and 5.

As with *Droids*, numbered volumes featured cover art with the title of the series followed by the volume number, an image from the show (with the UK rating symbol near the top), and a section at the bottom that named that volume, listed its episodes, and included the CBS/Fox Video label. Cassette labels were also similar to *Droids* in that they were black and white (except for the color UK rating symbol) with a CBS/Fox Video logo and used only the volume number, not the title of that volume.

Dairylea (in conjunction with CBS/Fox Video) also released a special, single-episode, mail-away VHS cassette, similar to their approach to *Droids*. The episode included was “Night of the Stranger” (with “Stranger” turned plural in another spelling error on the cover). Cover art used the same image of Wicket as *Battle for the Planet Endor* (which included that episode) with the episode title across the midsection above a red and yellow “With the Compliments of Dairylea” banner, which itself was over the CBS/Fox Video logo and UK rating. The cassette label was relatively plain: a black and white label (except for a color rating symbol) with the series title, misspelled episode title, and “With the Compliment of Dairylea” line again.



Ewoks: Night of the Strangers
Dairylea mail-away
(UK VHS, 1988)



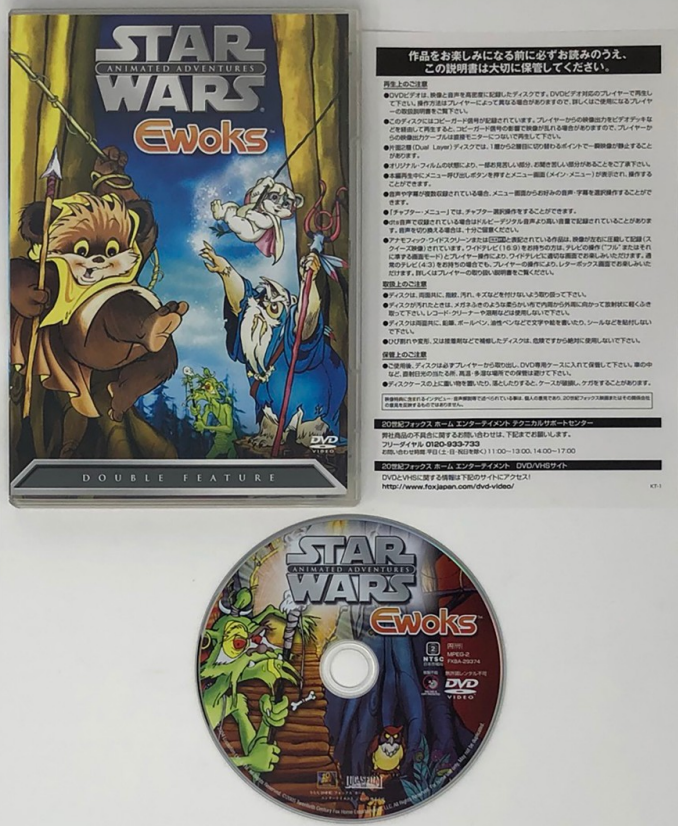
Label

Like with *Droids*, the mail-away was disappointing in that it included a previously-released episode (“Night of the Stranger” from *Battle for the Planet Endor*, the final UK VHS volume of *Ewoks*), rather than releasing either of the missing episodes from the series (“The Three Lessons” from the first season or the episode including both “Prow Beaten” and “Baga’s Rival” from the second).

Meanwhile in Japan (2005)

You know what’s coming here, right? Yes, 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment managed to produce a dual-layered, single-sided *Ewoks* double-feature DVD (Region 2, NTSC) for the Japanese market, just as they had for the *Ewok Adventures* and *Droids* double-features.

This time, disc art featured Umwak, the Dulok shaman. As with the other two similar releases, what we would consider “insert” material was included on the interior side of the case art slip, allowing it to be viewed through the product’s clear case.



Star Wars Animated Adventures: Ewoks double-feature (Japanese DVD, 2005)



Interior

I ask one final time, 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment: Was it *really* that hard to do this – to get it *right* – for the American market, instead of providing the substandard, double-sided discs released here? Surely not.

For a More Digital Age (2021)

35 years after the last regular episode of *Ewoks* aired on ABC and 31 years after the last time individual episodes of the series were released on physical media in the United States, both seasons of *Ewoks* returned to the spotlight as individual episodes when added to Disney+ on Apr. 2, 2021, as part of the saga's *Vintage* collection. No extras were included.

A Boxed Set, But Not Season Sets (2004)

As a final note on the 1980s *Ewoks* and *Droids* television productions, the three 2004 double-feature DVD releases examined to this point in this chapter (*Star Wars Animated Adventures: Droids* and *Ewoks*, plus the live action *Ewok Adventures*) were all released at the same time, which allowed warehouse clubs like Costco to release a boxed set of all three in a rather tall package (with Styrofoam to fill dead space), labeled as the *Star Wars Double Feature DVDs*. Aside from the new outer box, however, the products included were identical to the individual retail releases.



Star Wars Double Feature DVDs (DVD, 2004) – front (left) and back (right)

This was ostensibly just typical anti-theft club store packaging, as discussed when addressing similar releases for the live action films²⁸ and *Clone Wars* micro-series (as we will see next chapter), but rather than being a

²⁸ See the chapter *Rise of DVD, Demise of VHS* in *Volume I*.

standard retail release that happened to be in a longer box, this actually gave fans a boxed set for this trio of DVDs that otherwise did not exist.

The “club-sized” packaging was gradient silver and included (from top to bottom on both sides): the phrase “For the First Time Ever on DVD!”; the *Star Wars: Double Feature DVDs* logo; “3 Family Adventures;” the cover art of all three of the included DVDs; “Two Full-Length Features on Each DVD!”; and a curved bottom area that blended images from the products (*Droids*, *Ewok* telemovies, and *Ewoks* on one side, then *Ewok* telemovies, *Ewoks*, and *Droids* on the other).

Conclusion: Blast It, Lucasfilm/Disney, Come Take Our Money!

The release of the *Ewok* telemovies and cartoon series on Disney+ has mollified some fans, but the *Star Wars* TV productions of the 1980s remain a frustrating corner of *Star Wars* home video collecting. The treatment of the *Ewok Adventures* telemovies on home video has left little room for complaint, aside from a lack of extras in 2004, lack of a release on later physical formats, double-sided DVD, and how long it took for the programs to reach home video in the first place.

The moderate successes of the approach to the live action *Ewok* materials, though, pale in comparison to the glaring omissions in the *Star Wars* home video library of full series or seasons of *Droids* and *Ewoks* for the U.S. market. Fans have been asking for such sets for decades, and the notion has almost always been met with support when those within Lucasfilm have been approached about the possibility of such sets. After 35 years, though, both series remain unfinished on physical media for American home video collectors. Given the demand for both series, one would think that releasing them in physical form, even in a small production run, would be a “license to print money,” but so far, that appears to be money that the Powers That Be are willing to leave on the table.

Come on! We *want* to give you money for this!

Until they heed our ongoing call for *Droids* and *Ewoks* in their entirety on physical media, they will remain massive holes in the *Star Wars* home video library.

11 GENNDY GOES MICRO (2005 – 2007)

After the final episode of *Ewoks* aired on Dec. 13, 1986, no new *Star Wars* animation was aired on television in the U.S. until the Cartoon Network premiere of Genndy Tartakovsky's *Clone Wars*, which premiered its first chapter on Nov. 7, 2003, seventeen years later.²⁹

Clone Wars (also known as the *Clone Wars* “micro-series” due to its short installments) aired between programs on Cartoon Network (owned by Time Warner via its Turner Broadcasting System). Its first season included ten chapters of approx. 3 – 5 min., which aired weeknights from Nov. 7 – 20, 2003. A second season of ten chapters followed Mar. 26 – Apr. 8, 2004, and concluded with an episode that ran about 7 min. in length. A final season of five episodes, each 12 – 15 min. in length, aired each night from Mar. 21 – 25, 2005, helping to prepare fans for *Revenge of the Sith* in theaters two months later. Around the same time, the series began arriving on home video...

Not a Mini-series, a Micro-series (2005)

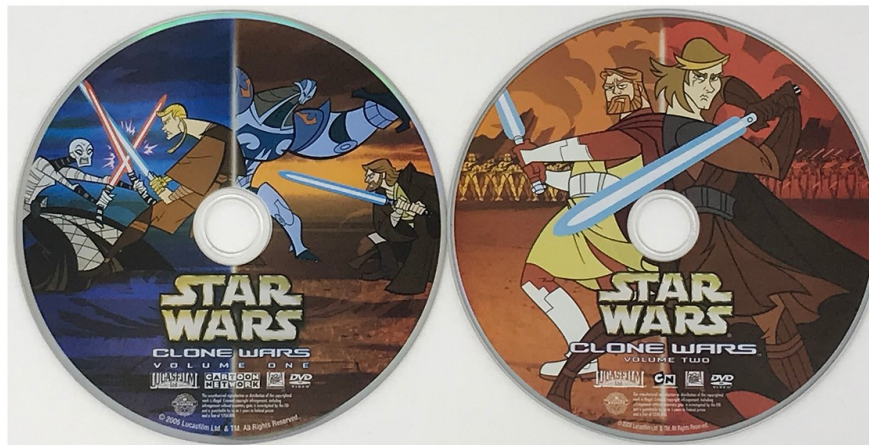
Unlike *Droids* and *Ewoks*, *Clone Wars* saw home video release relatively quickly. The first two seasons were combined to form *Clone Wars, Vol. 1* for release on Mar. 22, 2005, the day its 22nd chapter aired on Cartoon Network. This release came in a standard DVD case with cover art that

²⁹ If you are keeping score, that was just one year more than the gap between *Return of the Jedi*'s release in 1983 and that of *The Phantom Menace* in 1999.

split to show the Separatists on the left, Republic on the right, and Anakin straddling both sides in the foreground. It included all twenty chapters from the first two seasons combined into a single animated film (though the fourth and fifth aired chapters were reversed for this release). Also included were: two featurettes (*Behind the Scenes* and *Bridging the Saga*); trailers for *Revenge of the Sith*, the ROTS video game, and the *Republic Commando* video game; and a playable Xbox demo for *Republic Commando*.



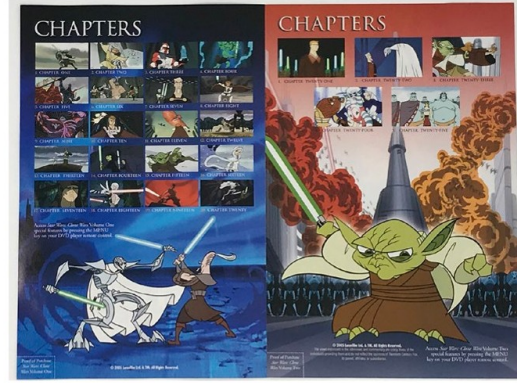
Clone Wars, Vol. 1 and 2 (DVD, 2005)



Labels: *Vol. 1* (left) and *2* (right)



Insert fronts: *Vol. 1* (left) and *2* (right)



Insert backs: *Vol. 1* (left) and *2* (right)

The third season arrived on DVD alongside the “family pack” *Original Trilogy* release on Dec. 6, 2005, as *Clone Wars*, *Vol. 2*, making this the first *Star Wars* cartoon series to have been entirely released on American home video. This release featured similar case art (albeit with the sides reversed) and all five chapters again merged into a single animated film. This time, only one featurette (*Connecting the Dots*) was included, alongside still galleries, a playable *Battlefront II* Xbox demo, the entire first official *LEGO Star Wars* short film (*Revenge of the Brick*³⁰), and trailers for *ROTS*, the *Battlefront II* video game, and the *Empire at War* video game.

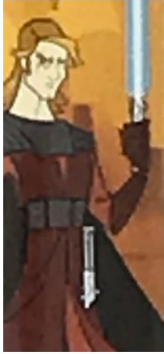
In an odd artistic flub, Anakin could be seen on the spine of *Clone Wars*, *Vol. 2* holding his ignited lightsaber... while the same lightsaber somehow hangs from his belt. The image appears to be the same one used for the volume's insert, Photoshopped onto a different background with the ignited lightsaber added into the image, though it could have been the other way around.³¹

Similar to the *Prequel* and *Original Trilogies* on DVD, each volume of *Clone Wars* featured a familiar type of “Easter egg” and selectable menus. To access the DVD production credits (which only played with still images from the series, rather than intercut with a gag reel for these discs), a viewer would go to a disc's “Options” menu and enter “1138” (either as “11” then “3” and “8” or perhaps with “10+” and then “1” to create “11,” as it varied by player) on the remote control. Also, as each disc launched with its FBI warning screen, entering “1” or “2,” followed by “Enter,” on either disc

³⁰ We will briefly take a look at this tale in the chapter *Brick by Brick*.

³¹ This was actually an error that would sometimes appear in animation. For example, in the later *The Clone Wars* episode “Crisis on Naboo,” Anakin defends himself against Dooku with his lightsaber... while it is also still on his belt.

would select the heroic or villainous version of the disc menu, respectively.



Anakin wields his lightsaber... and wears it on his belt?
(Artwork found on *Clone Wars*, Vol. 2 DVD case spine)

As with several other releases in this era, both volumes of *Clone Wars* received special anti-theft packaging for club stores, but the approach was rather odd. *Clone Wars*, Vol. 1 seems to have been initially released with two “standard” variants: a generic 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment longbox and one with blue-themed artwork specific to this release (featuring Obi-Wan Kenobi, Anakin Skywalker, Mace Windu, and Yoda on the front and Dooku, Asajj Ventress, and Durge on the back).



Clone Wars, Vol. 1
in anti-theft
packaging (2005)

Film-specific (left)
and generic (right)
packaging

When *Clone Wars*, Vol. 2 was released about nine months later, it received a yellow/orange longbox with artwork specific to that release.³² The style was different than it had been for the first volume, but it again

³² I have yet to see any evidence of a generic 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment variant for *Clone Wars*, Vol. 2, but it may exist.

included images of the same four heroes on the front and villains (in this case Dooku, Asajj, Grievous, and a B1 battledroid) on the back. The packaging also touted the series as now having won an Emmy Award.

What's particularly odd was that when *Vol. 2* was released in this packaging, which featured the updated, "older" character designs from the third season, *Vol. 1* was reissued alongside it in the *same* packaging that was specific to *Vol. 2*. Yes, you read that correctly. They were selling *Vol. 1* in its *Vol. 1* DVD case inside anti-theft packaging that was specific to *Vol. 2*, so that the character designs and messaging didn't match between the box and what was actually inside. I suppose stranger things have happened in *Star Wars* home video, but this one is pretty high on the weirdness scale.³³

Dec. 2005 *Clone Wars* anti-theft packaging (all film-specific... sort of)

Clone Wars, *Vol. 2* (left)
originated the packaging design, then (for some reason)
Clone Wars, *Vol. 1* (right)
reused the design, even though it didn't make much sense to do so.



One should also note that there was a "non-standard" variant available for at least *Vol. 1* at BJ's Wholesale Club that included a pack-in comic book. The comic in this package was thankfully just a standard, retail copy of *Clone Wars Adventures*, *Vol. 1* from Dark Horse Comics, the first in their digest-sized tie-in comics for the series, released in July 2004. The comic and *Clone Wars*, *Vol. 1* came in packaging similar to the product-specific, blue, anti-theft longbox released for the first volume around the same time, but the image of the heroes on the cover was replaced by the image of Anakin dueling Asajj Ventress found on the back of the DVD case, while the back's villain artwork was replaced by a shot of Mace Windu and clone troopers. The package was thicker than the standard release to make room

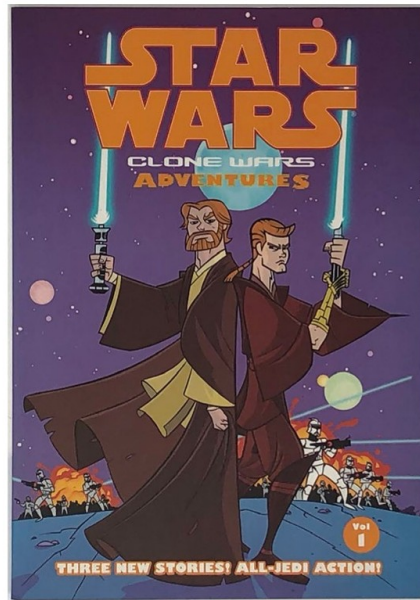
³³ I would not have believed this myself if I hadn't received a sealed, brand new copy of this reissue from fellow collector Matt Frey.

for the comic, which necessitated a wider spine/side design. Whereas the standard version used an image of Anakin at the bottom on both sides, the exclusive version featured a super battledroid on the left side and an ARC trooper (Fordo) on the right side.³⁴

I should note that since this is an extremely rare item today, there has often been confusion as to whether this was an exclusive item for one club store or perhaps available at all of them. If it was exclusive to just one store, which one was it? The answer can be found on the bottom of the box. Whereas the product identification information for many of the longbox packages (including these for *Clone Wars*, Vol. 1) would often say “generic” or abbreviate that label to “GEN,” this exclusive version replaced the “GEN” with a rather obvious identifier: “BJ” for BJ’s Wholesale Club. Thus, it was most certainly a retailer exclusive for that chain.



Clone Wars, Vol. 1 (DVD, 2005) – BJ’s Wholesale Club exclusive



Clone Wars Adventures, Vol. 1 (2004) – Note that this was not a variant cover.

³⁴ While this is incredibly difficult to find, even more so than the regular anti-theft versions of this series, at least home video collectors are not competing with comic collectors to track this one down, since the comic was just the retail version. That would change with the approach to the reissues of the *Original Trilogy* at Walmart in 2006 and the theatrical *The Clone Wars* film at Target in 2008. See the chapter *Rise of DVD, Demise of VHS* in *Volume I* for details about the former and *Rewriting the Clone Wars*, the next chapter in this volume, for details on the latter.

A Saga on Home Video: A Fan's Guide to U.S. *Star Wars* Home Video Releases



Front comparison: standard (left)
vs. BJ's exclusive (right)



Back comparison: standard (left)
vs. BJ's exclusive (right)



Left side comparison:
BJ's exclusive (left) vs. standard (right)



Right side comparison:
BJ's exclusive (left) vs. standard (right)



Product identification on box bottom: standard (top) vs. BJ's exclusive (bottom)

Changes for Better and/or Worse:

***Clone Wars*, Vol. 1 and 2 (2005)**

For home video, the episodes of the *Clone Wars* micro-series were mostly unchanged with the exception of what one would expect of a series being merged into feature-length productions.

As aired, most episodes included a “previously” segment prior to their new content, along with chapter numbers. At the end of each episode, Lucasfilm and Cartoon Network branding was displayed, along with a “next” segment to preview the following episode for all but the final episodes of each season. All of those elements, which would not make sense in a feature-length presentation, were cut so that episodes could transition seamlessly from one to another.

The *Clone Wars* title was also, of course, removed from all but the first episode on each DVD (i.e. “Chapter 1” for *Vol. 1* and “Chapter 21” for *Vol. 2*).

Each feature-length version also included a set of credits for the full season at the end (i.e. after “Chapter 20” and “Chapter 25,” respectively). The episodes had not included credits at all when aired on Cartoon Network.

Beyond those rather mundane, obvious changes, the only significant tweak was the reversal of “Chapter 4” and “Chapter 5,” which may seem nonsensical at first glance. However, one should consider that the original airing order followed the battle on Muunilinst for the first four episodes, then jumped to Kit Fisto on Mon Cala³⁵ for the fifth, followed by Asajj Ventress’ “audition” for Dooku in the sixth and seventh before finally returning to the story on Muunilinst. That conflict on Muunilinst, focusing on Obi-Wan and Durge, acted as a “spine” for the series’ first season and even anchored the end of the second with Anakin’s return just as the fighting ended. With the Battle of Muunilinst providing this sort of connective tissue, it seems likely that the powers that be decided to swap the fourth and fifth chapters because three chapters (two side stories) was too long away from the primary conflict of the season. By reversing the chapter order, we instead step away briefly for Kit’s adventure but then spend a chapter back on Muunilinst before again stepping away for Asajj’s tale. This keeps Obi-Wan’s struggle against Durge fresh in our minds throughout.

That or, y’know, someone screwed up. I prefer to think that the creative

³⁵ Or Mon Calamari. Or Dac. Or whatever it’s being called this week.

team made a rational decision, rather than a random alteration.

For a More Digital Age (2006)

The *Clone Wars* micro-series hit iTunes on May 25, 2006, about five months after the physical release of *Clone Wars, Vol. 2*. This was the first tentative step of *Star Wars* television programs into digital media.

Go Figure: Hasbro Commemorates Home Video *Clone Wars, Vol. 1* and *2* on DVD (2005)

Revenge of the Sith was not the only home video release in 2005 to receive Hasbro commemorative action figure packs. Both DVD volumes of *Clone Wars* also earned themselves action figure three-packs, though only two per volume instead of three like ROTS. Each pack was exclusive to Walmart and part of the broader *Clone Wars* product line.



Clone Wars Commemorative DVD
Collection: Jedi Force Pack (2005)



Clone Wars Commemorative DVD
Collection: Sith Attack Pack (2005)

The first round of two *Clone Wars Commemorative DVD Collection* packs (celebrating *Clone Wars, Vol. 1*) actually had individual names, akin to their ROTS contemporaries. The *Jedi Force Pack* included Anakin Skywalker, Obi-Wan Kenobi, and an ARC trooper (Fordo). The *Sith Attack Pack* included Asajj Ventress (not a Sith, but at least the apprentice to one), General Grievous (not a Sith, but at least trained by one), and Durge (best known in animation as a monstrous adversary who appeared to be made of gristle and Twizzlers when blown up). Each white pack bore the product line name at the top next to the *Star Wars* logo. The name of the pack appeared on the left side, while the right side included images of the three characters included in each pack. A tiny notice along the bottom reminded fans, “DVD not included.” While the ROTS packs had been blank behind the

action figures, these *Clone Wars* packs featured artwork of explosions behind the figures.

Unfortunately for figure collectors, these were all figures that were simply repackaged from their individual releases (2003 – 2005).

The second round of two packs commemorated the *Clone Wars*, Vol. 2 DVD launch. Packaging was black this time instead of white, but the design was otherwise similar. These packs, however, did not have their own names, both simply going by the name *Clone Wars Commemorative DVD Collection* instead.



Clone Wars Commemorative DVD Collection (2005)



Clone Wars Commemorative DVD Collection (2005)

One pack included Obi-Wan Kenobi, General Grievous, and Clone Commander Cody, while the other pack included Anakin Skywalker, Saesee Tiin, and a clone trooper. These fared much better for collectors, as they were all new or “new-ish” figures. Obi-Wan was a reworked 2004 figure with hair to match his new look. Grievous was a repaint of a figure released earlier in 2005. Cody was a reworked version of his 2004 figure. Anakin was taken partly from an earlier 2005 Anakin but given a new torso and head to match his appearance late in the series on Nelvaan. Saesee Tiin used the body from a 2004 Obi-Wan. The clone trooper was reworked from a previous 2004 clone trooper figure. In an era of frequent repackaged or slightly repainted figures, these were a nice change of pace.

Of Lightsabers and DVDs, Part 1 (2004 – 2007)

The two volumes of *Clone Wars* were not the only home video releases of episodes from the series. Each year from 2004 – 2007, Hasbro released lightsaber toys with pack-in DVDs. Each was labeled as a *Bonus Lightsaber*

Action DVD, but content varied.

The 2004 *Bonus Lightsaber Action DVD* (which strangely bore a 2005 copyright date) was found in several lightsaber toys³⁶, some of which (i.e. items from the *Original Trilogy* era) bore *The Original Trilogy Collection* branding (even though that was the name for the broader product line, regardless of trilogy). This first *Bonus Lightsaber Action DVD* (or “BLAD” as collectors sometimes refer to them) was recognizable by a cardboard, single-disc jacket with its title against a starfield background and an “empty” starfield (with only legal text) on a solid black back. The disc itself was also relatively plain with the *Star Wars* logo, disc title, and other information against a solid black background. This release included “Chapter 1” and “Chapter 8” of the *Clone Wars* micro-series in a format similar to the original Cartoon Network airing with an opening logo and chapter number (but no “previously” or “next” segments). The disc included the featurette *Legend of the Lightsaber* and trailers/commercials for the 2004 *Original Trilogy* DVD boxed set and two Hasbro *Star Wars* toys. Strangely, many of these discs went “into the wild” with small slips of paper that seemed to denote them as proof copies, which may mean that some proof copies were actually packed into retail releases once confirmed ready for release, or it might be that slips were erroneously added into the disc jackets for discs that were not proof copies at all.³⁷



Darth Vader lightsaber toy (including *Bonus Lightsaber Action DVD*, 2004)

Note “*The Original Trilogy Collection*” branding due to product era.

³⁶ I’m told that this particular variant of the product line was exclusive to Walmart, but I have not been able to confirm that.

³⁷ I have several of this BLAD, both loose and from brand new lightsaber toy packages. All but one included the “proof” slip. That can’t be dumb luck. It must have been somewhat pervasive.



Anakin Skywalker lightsaber toy (including *Bonus Lightsaber Action DVD*, 2004)
Note the lack of “The Original Trilogy Collection” branding due to product era.



Bonus Lightsaber Action DVD (DVD, 2004)

FINAL FILM RELEASE	
PRODUCT #:	84886095G
DATE:	9/29/04
PRODUCT NAME:	SW ELECTRONIC LIGHTSABER WITH DVD
DESIGNER:	
PKG ENGINEER:	
COPYWRITER:	
MARKETING:	
COMMENTS:	Revision 2
NOTICE: This proof represents final packaging. Any changes may result in additional charges to the committed budget and may cause delays to the production schedule.	

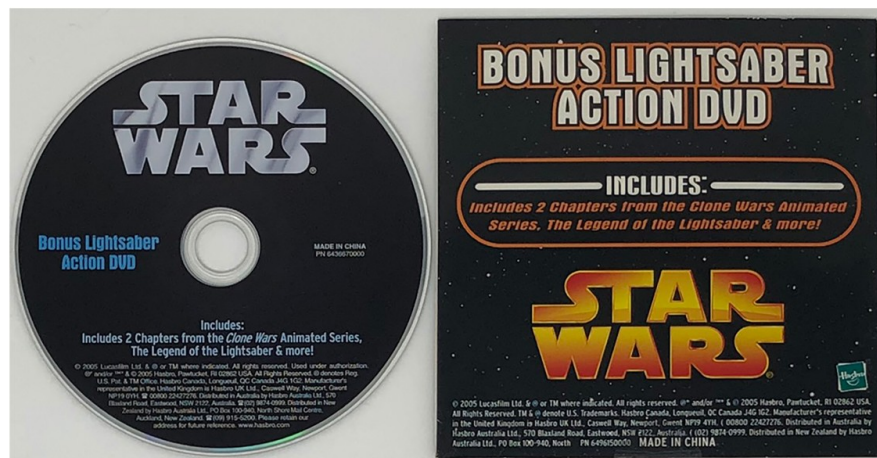
Proof slip found in quite a few 2004 lightsaber toys on the secondary market

A second *Bonus Lightsaber Action DVD* was included in a variant of a single Hasbro lightsaber product in 2005 within the *Revenge of the Sith* product line. This was the “Ultimate Lightsaber” toy, which, rather than

replicating the lightsaber of a single character, offered numerous lightsaber parts so that children could build their own customized saber. These “Ultimate Lightsaber” packs were widely available, but it was a retailer exclusive version³⁸ that included a second version of the *Bonus Lightsaber Action DVD*.



Ultimate Lightsaber toy (including *Bonus Lightsaber Action DVD*, 2005)
Note the indicator in the top left corner to denote inclusion of DVD.



Bonus Lightsaber Action DVD (DVD, 2005)

The disc jacket featured text on one side and a clear window on the

³⁸ Again, I'm told this was at Walmart, but I cannot confirm that myself.

other, through which one could see the disc. The front of the jacket included essentially the same information as the 2004 jacket (the product's title, contents, and a *Star Wars* logo, which was orange this time) plus the disc's legal notices, which would not fit on the back due to the clear disc window. The DVD's content and label were both identical to the 2004 version. Only the jacket and product it was packed into had changed.

A third version of the *Bonus Lightsaber Action DVD* appeared on toy shelves in 2006 inside specially-marked lightsaber toys from *The Saga Collection*.³⁹ These were lightsabers modeled after specific characters' weapons, similar to those in 2004 and that we will soon see in 2007, rather than a single odd kit like in 2005. Instead of packing the DVD (in its jacket) within the main body of the packaging as in 2004 – 2005, the home video item was packaged in a separate section, surrounded in clear plastic, that was connected onto a regular lightsaber toy package by tape. The connection wasn't terrible, but it did feel a bit flimsier than one might have hoped, making these a bit tricky to keep in good shape over time.



Darth Vader lightsaber toy (including *Bonus Lightsaber Action DVD*, 2006)
Note that the packaging was two separate pieces connected with tape.

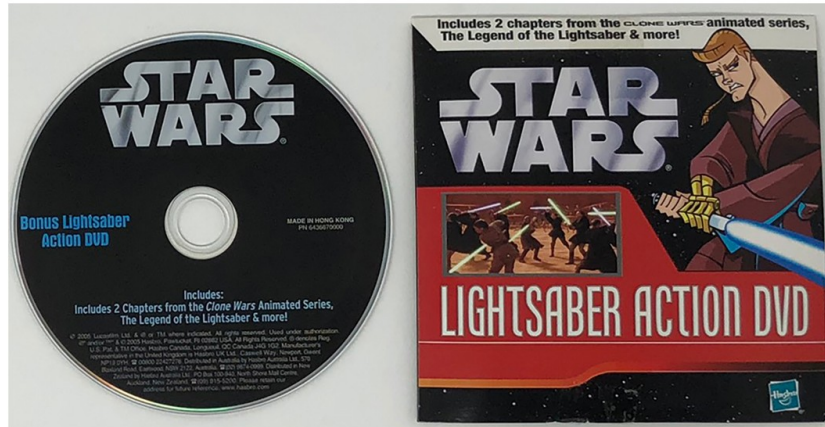


Anakin Skywalker/Darth Vader lightsaber toy (same product line) – Note that even though the features of the toy differed, such as the color-changing blade for this product, that was independent of whether the DVD was included.

The 2006 *Bonus Lightsaber Action DVD* came in a jacket that was a bit more eye-catching than in 2004 – 2005. Contents were noted at the top, while an image of Anakin from early in the *Clone Wars* series dominated the

³⁹ Again, probably as a Walmart exclusive, though I have been unable to confirm that exclusivity.

front, next to a screenshot of the arena battle from AOTC, all over the title *Lightsaber Action DVD* (sans “Bonus,” which was still part of the product title as listed on the outside of the little compartment that held the DVD onto the lightsaber toy). The back of the disc jacket again had a clear section to see the disc (along with legalese now beneath it), and since the taped-on compartment holding the DVD was open in the back of its cardboard frame and surrounded by clear plastic, buyers could actually see the disc label without opening the package for the first time.



Bonus Lightsaber Action DVD (DVD, 2006)

The disc bore the same label as the previous two versions, including the same product number and copyright date of 2005. However, content was slightly different. It again included both “Chapter 1” and “Chapter 8” of the *Clone Wars* micro-series, but this time neither episode began with the show’s title screen, just the chapter number. It still included *Legend of the Lightsaber*, but it dropped the commercials for the 2004 *Original Trilogy* DVD release and lightsaber toys in favor of *The Story of Anakin Skywalker*, a retelling of Anakin’s story by C-3PO and R2-D2 using clips from TPM and AOTC that had been part of two *The Story of Star Wars* PVD releases for VideoNow players in 2004 and 2005, along with half of the Walmart and Sam’s Club exclusive *The Story of Star Wars* bonus DVD with purchase of ROTS in 2005.⁴⁰

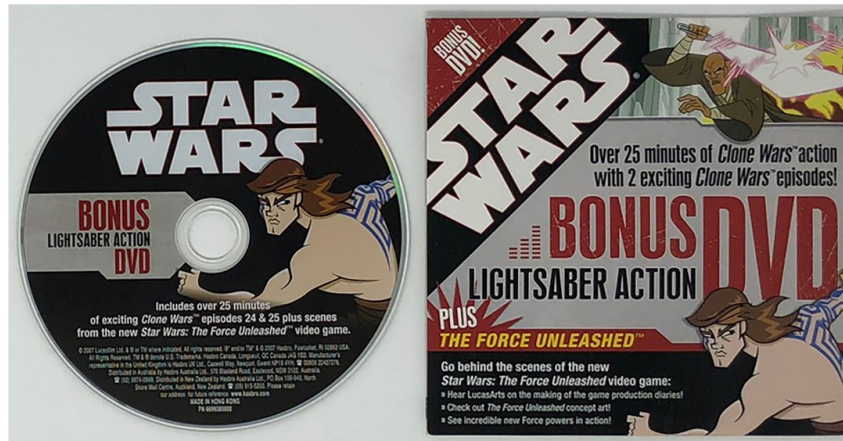
In 2007, a fourth *Bonus Lightsaber Action DVD* was packed in with several *The Saga Collection* Hasbro lightsaber toys. Standard versions of the toys could be found widely, but the version that included this fourth BLAD

⁴⁰ See the chapter *A Cantina Full of Oddballs* later this volume for information about the former and *Rise of DVD, Demise of VHS* in *Volume I* for the latter.

was exclusive to Walmart. This 2007 *Bonus Lightsaber Action DVD* included the final two chapters (24 – 25) of *Clone Wars* (this time in the full Cartoon Network format with the “previously” and “next” segments) and a sneak peek at the upcoming *The Force Unleashed* video game. The jacket for this version was hard to miss. It featured Anakin and Mace Windu in battle poses among bold, large, “exciting” text on one side and a clear window on the reverse through which the disc (similarly featuring Anakin from late in the *Clone Wars* micro-series) could be seen. The disc (in its jacket) was again packaged in a yellow section on the end of the lightsaber toy, but the section was built into the packaging this time, rather than simply taped on as it had been in 2006.



Walmart exclusive Darth Vader Force Action Lightsaber toy
(including *Bonus Lightsaber Action DVD*, 2007)



Bonus Lightsaber Action DVD (DVD, 2007)

This would not be the last time that we would see *Star Wars* home video discs packaged with toys (lightsabers or otherwise).

For a More Digital Age (2021)

16 years after the physical release of *Clone Wars*, Vol. 1 and 2 on DVD, both volumes finally reemerged by joining Disney+ on Apr. 2, 2021, as part of the saga's *Vintage* collection. These were the combined DVD versions, provided in HD, rather than the small, individual episodes. In that sense, the micro-series (dubbed officially as the *2D Micro-series* for Disney+) was

given the opposite treatment of *Evoks* on the same day, using a merged home video version of the content instead of aired episodes. No extras were included.

Changes for Better and/or Worse:

***Clone Wars*, Vol. 1 and 2 on Disney+ (2021)**

The versions of *Clone Wars* that were released on Disney+ were ostensibly just Vol. 1 and 2 in HD, but there *were* some minor differences for the first (but not the second) volume.⁴¹

***Clone Wars*, Vol. 1**

For the first volume, which contains “Chapters 1 – 20,” changes seem to have only included transitions.

Originally, the transition from “Chapter 1” to “Chapter 2” was somewhat jarring because of its music. A segment of “Across the Stars” played as Anakin rose in the *Azure Angel* to “wave” goodbye to Padmé, but it was cut off abruptly for more brooding music at the opening of “Chapter 2” that continued to play as Obi-Wan briefed his troops. In the Disney+ version, however, “Across the Stars” is allowed to continue playing at the end of “Chapter 1” just a tiny bit longer, enough to hear the first bit of music from when AOTC would’ve “irised out” to the end credits. The brooding music for the opening of “Chapter 2,” meanwhile, never plays at all, even once the chapter is in full swing with Obi-Wan’s briefing, which now has no music at all.⁴²

A more nonsensical transition issue occurs after every fifth chapter (i.e. after “Chapters 5,” “10,” and “15”). Each time, instead of transitioning seamlessly into the next episode, the screen goes black in the Disney+ version for several seconds before beginning the next chapter. These “blank spaces” take about 3 – 5 sec. each time. Another also occurs between “Chapters 19” and “20,” breaking that pattern.

When the credits roll, they are zoomed in for Disney+, such that the

⁴¹ Please note that since one of these differences was purely auditory, and I tend to compare by watching two versions side-by-side simultaneously, some audio tweaks might have slipped past me on these.

⁴² I would never have noticed this without the keen ears of Joe Harrison and Steven Shinder.

very top is sometimes cut off. For example, Corey Burton's voice credit for "San Hill/Count Dooku/Warrior #2" is sliced so that only the bottom half of the letters are visible. On the first credit screen for Rough Draft Studios, Inc., of South Korea, the top of "Overseas Production Facility" is cut off. On the second screen of Rough Draft Studios' credits, the top half of the first line ("3-D Animation & Composite by") is cut off, as is the bottom half of the last name in the credits (Paul Mahotz). The copyright notice at the bottom of the last credit screen before the Lucasfilm logo is also cut in half at the bottom.

Another credits screen, the one noting, "High Definition Conform and Titles by: ACMEworks Digital Film, INC.," is entirely missing from the Disney+ version. (On the DVD, it follows the two Rough Draft Studios credit screens.)

Finally, after the Lucasfilm and Cartoon Network Studios ("A Time Warner Company") logos at the end of the credits, the Disney+ version actually *adds* a logo: the standard "Cartoon Network" logo with "A Time Warner Company" with its own brief music cue. (That final logo was on the DVD for *Vol. 2*, so while it is also on *Vol. 2* on Disney+, it is only an actual change for *Vol. 1*.)

Conclusion: A Worthy Start and a *Lot* of Lightsaber Toys

The home video releases of Tartakovsky's *Clone Wars* were nice packages, given the relative brevity of the Cartoon Network program they were collecting. The fact that the entire series was collected into two volumes, rather than milking the fan base by selling three (i.e. one per season), was laudable. The frequent releases of *Bonus Lightsaber Action DVD* products was an interesting marketing gimmick and one that we will see continue into the era of the micro-series' much more robust and long-running sibling.

So long, *Clone Wars*. Make way for *The Clone Wars*...

12 REWRITING THE CLONE WARS

(2008 – 2020)

Prior to the Apr. 2014 announcement that the existing Official *Star Wars* Continuity of books, comics, video games, etc. would be treated as “Legends” to make way for a new, canonical continuity, no other single event or story had more of a disruptive impact on that earlier continuity than *The Clone Wars*.

In Jan. 2008, fans were introduced to Ahsoka Tano, a new apprentice for Anakin Skywalker that did not exist in any of the previous continuity. Until that point, Anakin had been a Padawan himself until only six months before *Revenge of the Sith*. The next month, fans learned that the new cartoon series, which was announced for Cartoon Network, would begin with a theatrical film. That film finally arrived on Aug. 15, 2008, bringing a new version of the Clone Wars era in which Anakin was promoted to full Jedi Knight status soon after *Attack of the Clones*, Ahsoka Tano was his Padawan throughout most of the conflict, and new characters like Captain Rex were introduced into the saga. With *The Clone Wars* declared to be a new level of canon (T- or Television Canon) that could supersede anything from the C- (or Continuity) Canon of the comics, books, and so on, the three year span of the Clone Wars that had been meticulously planned and detailed by Del Rey, Dark Horse Comics, LucasArts, and others since 2002 was suddenly thrown into continuity chaos as new stories overwrote others, causing a jumble of stories that made sense on their own but were a chronological mess when one tried to reconcile pre- and post-2008 Clone Wars stories.⁴³

⁴³ We were told that we would eventually get a solution to how this era of

By the time *The Clone Wars* film arrived on home video on Nov. 11, 2008, the television series had already launched on Cartoon Network (Oct. 3, 2008). Fandom was noticeably split over the show and its changes to the saga to a degree not seen again until Walt Disney Company's acquisition of Lucasfilm. Fortunately, while the film's home video release did mark several important milestones in *Star Wars* home video, its arrival on Blu-ray, DVD, and digital formats did not spark any *further* controversy. In fact, its most important contribution to the development of the *Star Wars* home video library – the saga's first Blu-ray release – received near-universal applause.

***The Clone Wars* Makes *Star Wars* Blu (2008)**

Prior to the Disney era, *The Clone Wars* held the record for how quickly a *Star Wars* theatrical release could arrive on home media. Just 88 days passed between its theatrical and home video releases. That was just four days longer than *The Rise of Skywalker's* arrival on digital platforms in 2020 (bumped up due to the COVID-19 pandemic) and tied with the digital release of *The Last Jedi*. However, even today it maintains the record of 88 days for *physical* release.

As mentioned in the chapter *The Lucas Films in HD* in *Volume I*, this release marked the first time that any *Star Wars* theatrical film (live action or animated) was released to the U.S. home video market on Blu-ray and thus in high definition. The live action films had already aired in HD on Cinemax in 2006 and on Spike TV four months before *The Clone Wars* hit theaters, but never before had fans had the option to purchase a copy of a *Star Wars* release in HD.

Due to being distributed in theaters through Warner Bros., which was not a shock since the television series would be on Warner-owned Cartoon Network, *The Clone Wars* was the first *Star Wars* home video release to come from Warner Home Video.⁴⁴ (Even Genndy Tartakovsky's *Clone Wars*

contradictory stories was supposed to fit together for the Legends continuity. That has never actually happened, but it has become a less pressing issue, given that the new canon only contains the 2008 – 2020 *The Clone Wars* TV series, rather than the pre-2008 Clone Wars materials (even the Tartakovsky micro-series).

⁴⁴ For those keeping track of the various incarnations of home video producers, Warner Home Video was the company's moniker from 1980 through 2016, firmly placing all TCW releases to date under that banner. It was originally known as WCI (Warner Communications, Inc.) Home Video (1978 – 1980) and is currently known as Warner Bros. Home Entertainment (2016 – present).

micro-series had been released by 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, despite airing on Cartoon Network.)



The Clone Wars (Blu-ray, Digital, 2008) –
Note the digital copy on a disc that required a code.

The standard Blu-ray release of *The Clone Wars* came in a regular, blue Blu-ray case, which held two discs: the film itself with all of its bonus features on a single Blu-ray disc and a DVD that was *not* a DVD copy of the film but instead a physical disc to hold a digital copy that could be unlocked using a code found on a paper insert. (We had not yet reached the era of Blu-ray/DVD combo packs being “normal,” nor for the typical digital copy to be a simple code for online redemption and downloading.) The standard Blu-ray case with its cover featuring Anakin with clone troopers behind him was accompanied by a cardboard slipcover with an identical back and a front that was lenticular. That lenticular cover shifted from Anakin with clones to Asajj Ventress with Separatist droids behind her as the viewer changed perspective. The Asajj artwork was from an international, theatrical poster of the character that was part of a pair (with the other being Anakin) known as the “animated action” posters. The same art was used in the U.S. as part of a cardboard standee in theaters with the film’s version A poster (which we will see quite often in this chapter) on one side, the Asajj art on the other, and artwork from the Anakin poster (which was similar to the Anakin cover on the Blu-ray thematically but rather differently posed) on the final side.

There has been some confusion as to whether the lenticular slipcover was available at all retailers or only some, but that seems to be a matter of restocking copies without the slipcover in some locations, rather than an actual difference from retailer to retailer. This confusion was exacerbated by restocked copies without the slipcover bearing the same stickers on their shrink wrap as found on copies with the slipcover.



The belief that the lenticular cover for the TCW film was only available at some stores probably began because of restocking. Notice that both copies here bear the same stickers. The first copies bore the slipcover with stickers on it. Later copies bore the same stickers on the shrink wrap without a slipcover included at all.

The Blu-ray disc label featured Anakin, Obi-Wan, Ahsoka, and Yoda to the right at mid-distance, Commander Fox in the foreground to the left, and clones behind everyone. This was essentially the wide version of the film's version A poster artwork with Fox added on the left and the explosion behind the characters shifted from the right (behind the Jedi) to the center. The digital copy disc was simply blue with appropriate iconography.

Thanks to the increased capacity of Blu-ray, all of the film's bonus features were on the same disc as the film itself. The bonus features included an image gallery (42 images of matte paintings, concept art, etc.), trailers for *The Clone Wars* TV series and its accompanying video games (*Lightsaber Duels* for the Nintendo Wii and *Jedi Alliance* for the Nintendo DS, released the same day as the film's home video launch), three featurettes (*The Untold Stories*, *The Voices of Star Wars: The Clone Wars*, and *A New Score*), four deleted scenes, six webisodes from the official *Star Wars* website, and a pair of items exclusive to Blu-ray: the *Mandalorian Memory Challenge*

interactive game that allowed successful viewers to see three sneak peeks at the show's first season and a full-length video (rather than audio) commentary for the film.⁴⁵

The video commentary often shifted the film toward the upper left portion of the screen to allow footage of members of the creative team to appear in a video box on the bottom right area of the screen, while various clips, concept art, and similar items sometimes appeared to the left of the commentator, beneath the film itself, to help illustrate points being made by the creative team. Video commentaries were one of the new features touted for Blu-ray in the format's infancy, but they have, unfortunately, never become the norm. In fact, this full-length video commentary remains the only one of its kind for *Star Wars*.⁴⁶

The film's audio included a Dolby TrueHD 5.1 option, a lossless form of audio that was a direct competitor to the 6.1 DTS-HD Master Audio we'd see a few years later when the live action films finally hit Blu-ray in 2011.

The code slip for this and all of the digital copy codes for the TCW film product line was generic in its design. Text at the top read, "How to get your digital copy of" (with the "o" in "copy" as a disc) followed by the film's logo. To make it easier to comprehend exactly what this "newfangled" digital copy thing was all about, the logo was followed by an image of a disc with an arrow pointing to a laptop. Instructions, the code, and legalese followed.

One variant existed in the U.S. for *The Clone Wars* film on Blu-ray. Target sold an exclusive version with an alternate cover for the Blu-ray case, which featured the image used for the regular release's disc label as its packaging artwork (i.e. version A poster art of the quartet of Jedi to the right at middle distance and clones to the rear, plus Fox added to the poster art in the left foreground). This artwork was repeated on a non-lenticular slipcover that packaged the Blu-ray case with an exclusive variant cover

⁴⁵ In the first edition of this guide, I erroneously included the audio commentary from the DVD as one of the bonus features of the Blu-ray. The Blu-ray release only has the video commentary, not the audio commentary. Thankfully, fellow collector Matthew Hardesty pointed out the error so I could address it. We will see, though, that was it somewhat of a distinction without much difference.

⁴⁶ We would see abridged video commentaries that were more like extended featurettes for *The Clone Wars: The Complete Season Four*, but no more full-length video commentaries.

version of Dark Horse Comics' *The Clone Wars: Shipyards of Doom*.⁴⁷ While the original cover for this first *The Clone Wars* digest was blue with Anakin, Obi-Wan, and Ahsoka together, this Target variant had an orange cover featuring Ahsoka and Fox.⁴⁸ This time, the film disc's label featured a shot directly from the film (Anakin, Ahsoka, Obi-Wan, and Yoda with clone troopers standing at attention), while the digital copy disc's label was identical to the standard edition. Due to the Blu-ray case being slightly shorter than the height of the comic, this package included a small piece of folded cardboard that sat beneath the Blu-ray case to align its top with that of the comic within the slipcover.



The Clone Wars (Blu-ray, Digital, 2008) – Target exclusive

⁴⁷ This comic was also notable in the history of *The Clone Wars* in that it was written by Henry Gilroy and used an abandoned concept for the show's early *Malevolence* arc in which Jedi and clones would have infiltrated enemy territory by being frozen in carbonite. Two seasons later, this concept was reused on the show in the episode "The Citadel."

⁴⁸ Commander Fox wasn't even in the comic, but he wound up on the exclusive cover, possibly because his red and white armor matched the color scheme of Target's own logo and branding.



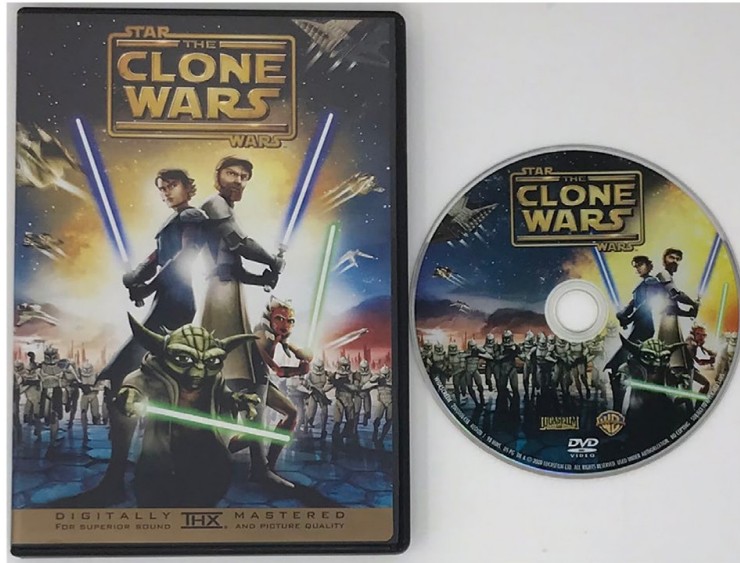
The Clone Wars: Shipyards of Doom (2008) – retail (left) vs. Target variant (right)



Target exclusive height comparison: slipcover; comic; and Blu-ray case with necessary piece of folded cardboard to make up for height differential

The film was also released on DVD, again with variants. The most basic release came in a standard DVD case without a slipcover. The film's poster art (version A) graced the cover, while the wide version of that poster was used for the disc label. The package's single disc included the film with an audio commentary, which was essentially just the same audio as the Blu-ray's video commentary without any visuals beyond just watching the film. No other bonus features were included, nor was a digital copy. Audio matched the standards of the other *Star Wars* theatrical films (released in

this era by 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment) by including Dolby Digital 5.1 EX (AKA Dolby Digital Surround EX) as the most complex audio option.⁴⁹



The Clone Wars (DVD, 2008)

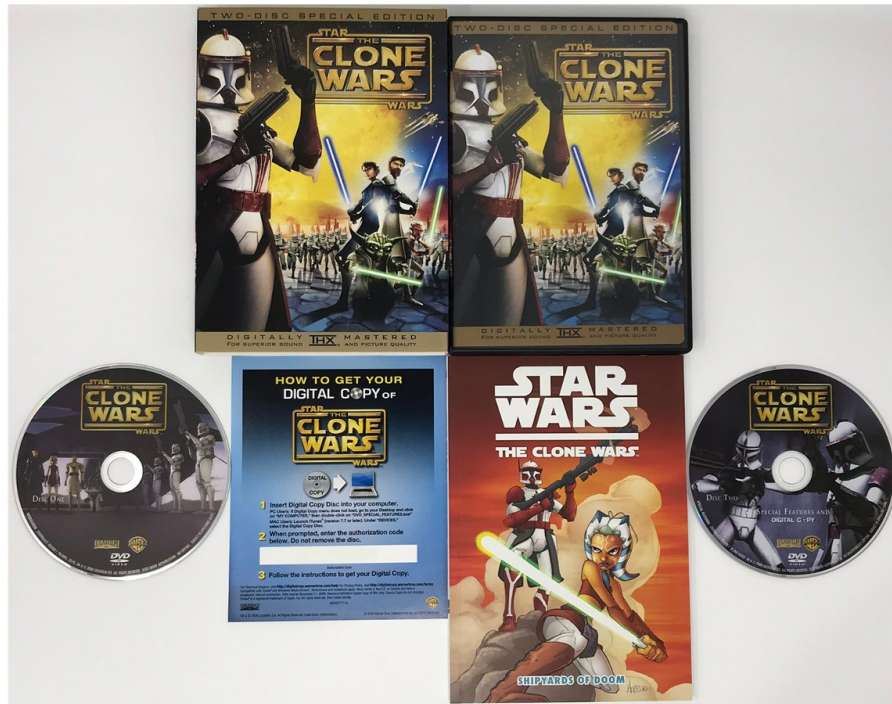
A second regular retail DVD release was a two-disc version with packaging very similar to the regular Blu-ray release, right down to its lenticular cover. The only major alteration, other than size and the specifics on the back was to replace the blue, “Blu-ray disc” region at the top with a gold bar that labeled this the *Two-Disc Special Edition*. The first disc’s content was identical to the single-disc DVD release, but its label featured Yoda with clones (led by Commander Cody) behind him and text noting it as “Disc One.” The second disc’s label replaced Yoda with Anakin. (The rest of the background for each disc label resembled the background of the version A poster art.) The second disc contained all of the bonus content from the Blu-ray release with the exception of the *Mandalorian Memory Challenge* and video commentary. This disc also included the digital copy, still unlocked by a code on a paper insert, rather than having the digital copy stored on a DVD of its own. As such, this second disc was labeled “Disc Two: Special Features and Digital Copy.”

⁴⁹ See the chapters *Rise of DVD*, *Demise of VHS* and *The Lucas Films in HD* in *Volume I* for more information on those releases. Reissues of those releases are also briefly covered in *Volume II* in the chapter *Enter: Disney*.



The Clone Wars (DVD, Digital, 2008)

Target issued an exclusive version of the DVD *Two-Disc Special Edition* as well, featuring art and a bonus item similar to the Blu-ray Target exclusive. The film disc label featured the same scene as the Target exclusive Blu-ray film disc, while the bonus features and digital copy disc featured another shot from the film: Commander Fox and another member of the Coruscant Guard with blasters drawn during the rescue of Padmé. Content was otherwise identical to the standard, two-disc DVD release. This package, like its big, Blu-ray brother, came with a cardboard slipcover of the package art that held the DVD case and a variant cover copy of *Shipyards of Doom*, though this one did not need a small piece of cardboard to fill extra space, since the DVD case took up the full height of the slipcover. Again, the top of the slipcover and case art was slightly altered to remove the “Blu-ray disc” region and replace it with the gold *Two-Disc Special Edition* indicator.



The Clone Wars (DVD, Digital, 2008) – Target exclusive

Walmart offered its own variant, though it was only available with a DVD copy of the film. No Blu-ray version was offered. This Walmart exclusive version was the regular, single-disc DVD release (in its standard case), which was packaged within a wide cardboard box alongside a special, small (6.81 in. x 5.31 in.), variant version of the picture book *The Clone Wars: The Battle Begins* by Rob Valois, which slid into the opposite side of the package to the DVD and needed a small piece of cardboard to fill the extra space around it. The book, based on the film, was originally released in a much larger form (11.38 in. x 8.75 in.) on July 28, 2008, to promote the upcoming film.

Due to how it held the DVD case and book side-by-side, this Walmart package was wider than its fellow releases. The cover of the cardboard package showed the full art of the single-disc DVD release on the left (complete with a replicated sticker that many copies carried on their shrink wrap that proclaimed this as “the first animated *Star Wars* movie”) and an image of the book on the right. The right side also included the film’s logo above the book and text about the exclusive book beneath it. A sticker noting this as an “exclusive DVD 2-pack” that was “only at Walmart” was in the center, as if holding the two halves of the product together. Today, this is typically the most difficult TCW film release to acquire in the U.S.



The Clone Wars (DVD, 2008) – Walmart exclusive



Included *The Battle Begins* bonus book and standard DVD release



The Clone Wars: The Battle Begins (2008) – retail (top) vs. Walmart variant (bottom)

Another variant available for DVD (but not Blu-ray) came from Best Buy. This was a SteelBook version of the two-disc release, which featured Captain Rex on the front, action scenes and credits on the back, and disc labels that were relatively bare with Rex in a different pose on each. Otherwise, the disc contents were again identical to the regular, two-disc release. Interior art featured clone troopers on the right and Separatist droids on the left. This was the very first time that an American *Star Wars* release had received a SteelBook and so far the only American *Star Wars* SteelBook variant to be for an SD release instead of an HD or Ultra HD release.

A Saga on Home Video: A Fan's Guide to U.S. *Star Wars* Home Video Releases



The Clone Wars (DVD, Digital, 2008) – Best Buy exclusive



Best Buy exclusive SteelBook (exterior)



Interior

It is worth noting here that the idea of digital copies being included with films was relatively new in 2008. Apple's iTunes had only introduced support for purchasing digital video content in Oct. 2005, and the ability to purchase full-length movies was not added until Sept. 2006. Therefore it is probably not a surprise that the digital copy of the film that was included in all but the single-disc DVD release of *The Clone Wars* film was just a copy of the movie without any special features whatsoever. Still, though, it was the first time that any *Star Wars* home video release provided a digital copy as part of the purchase, something that would not happen for *Episodes I – VI* (due to distribution rights) until 21st Century Fox entertainment assets were purchased by Walt Disney Company in 2019.⁵⁰

It is also noteworthy that *The Clone Wars* premiered on home video in 2008, the same year as the DVD boxed sets of the *Prequel* and *Original Trilogies*, which were the first time since 1992 that fans hadn't had the option to purchase a full screen version of a given *Star Wars* film release. *The Clone Wars* film was also released only in widescreen. The days of full screen were (mostly) over.

For a More Digital Age (2008, 2019)

The Clone Wars film's digital copy was redeemed through iTunes, thereby adding that film to the user's library, which can now be used not just to

⁵⁰ Disney era live action films would include digital copies with HD (and later Ultra HD) copies starting in 2016 with *The Force Awakens*.

download but to stream the film. It was also available for purchase through iTunes on the same day.⁵¹

The film would eventually become a launch title for Disney+ on Nov. 12, 2019. A single extra was included: the film's theatrical trailer (minus the final screen of the film's release date).

Before we leave this release, we should briefly take stock of just how many milestones it truly represented: the first *Star Wars* Blu-ray; the first (and so far only) full-length video commentary for a *Star Wars* film (or TV series); the first *Star Wars* film release to include a digital copy; the first digital release of a *Star Wars* theatrical film; the first *Star Wars* SteelBook (and only DVD SteelBook); the first *The Clone Wars* release of any kind (and only SteelBook for the series overall); the first *Star Wars* theatrical film to be released without a full screen home video option available; the fastest turnaround for a theatrical film to digital release prior to the Disney era; and the fastest turnaround from theater to physical home media for any *Star Wars* theatrical film release. The film itself may tend to be derided as subpar, but its impact on the history of *Star Wars* home video releases was quite the opposite.

Go Figure: Hasbro Commemorates Home Video *The Clone Wars* on Blu-ray and DVD (2008)

Just like its micro-series *Clone Wars* counterparts in 2005⁵², the home video release of *The Clone Wars* was celebrated by Hasbro with a pair of Walmart exclusive action figure packs. These *The Clone Wars Commemorative DVD Collection* packs bore poster-style images on their left side (with Anakin or Obi-Wan featured prominently), while the film's title was found to the upper right of the packaging. The product line name and list of

⁵¹ The idea of packing physical home video releases with codes or discs for digital copies (specifically through iTunes during the concept's early days) was first announced by 20th Century Fox CEO Jim Gianopulous and Apple CEO Steve Jobs at the MacWorld Expo on Jan. 15, 2008. The first title to include an iTunes digital copy with a physical copy was *Family Guy: Blue Harvest*, a *Star Wars* parody released on home video that same day. HD movie purchases did not come to iTunes until 2009.

⁵² See the chapter *Genndy Goes Micro*.

included action figures ran along the bottom, while the typical “DVD Not Included” reminder was placed on either side instead of on the front, next to the film and product line names again.



The Clone Wars Commemorative DVD Collection (2008)



The Clone Wars Commemorative DVD Collection (2008)

Neither pack had a name or number, but they could be differentiated by their figures and artwork, as in the case of the *Clone Wars*, Vol. 2 packs three years earlier. One pack included Anakin Skywalker, R2-D2, and a clone trooper, while the other included Obi-Wan Kenobi, General Grievous, and a B1 battledroid. (This was odd in the case of the second pack because Obi-Wan had a clone trooper helmet that he never wore in the film, and General Grievous wasn't even in the film, except in newsreel flashbacks.) Unfortunately for collectors, every single figure was just repackaged from the regular product line from the same year. This was just an exclusive way to get them packaged together.

To date, this was the last of these commemorative action figure packs to celebrate an animated *Star Wars* product, rather than a live action film. It was also the last to commemorate a DVD release, rather than a Blu-ray or digital release.⁵³

Meanwhile in the Netherlands (2008)

⁵³ Yes, there were simultaneous Blu-ray and digital releases for this film, but these products called themselves *The Clone Wars Commemorative DVD Collection*, specifically referencing the standard definition format. It was odd at the time and remains even more so in retrospect.

One of the great frustrations for American SteelBook collectors over the years has been the lack of a Blu-ray SteelBook release for *The Clone Wars* film. Yes, an American SteelBook was available at Best Buy, but that was for the DVD release and in DVD dimensions, making it taller than later American *Star Wars* SteelBook releases. Fortunately, collectors did have at least one international option for filling this gap in their Blu-ray SteelBook collections. In the Netherlands, the film was released on Blu-ray in a SteelBook that closely mirrored the American DVD SteelBook.



The Clone Wars (Dutch Blu-ray, 2008)



Dutch SteelBook (exterior)



Interior

The disc label was similar to the first disc of the American DVD SteelBook, and while it did not bear the typical “Region ABC” region-free symbol that we would expect of a modern, region-free Blu-ray, it was indeed region-free and played in American players.

Some still find frustration in this release, however. First, it is relatively difficult to find today and will often fetch high prices on eBay and elsewhere. Second, the blue “Blu-ray” strip across the top of the Dutch SteelBook was built into the SteelBook itself, rather than a cardboard J-card, making it look even more unusual alongside its various live action counterparts in later years. The film’s rating in the Netherlands was also built into the SteelBook’s bottom right corner, though it was far less obtrusive.⁵⁴

Meanwhile in the United Kingdom (2008)

While the UK saw the typical Blu-ray and DVD releases of *The Clone Wars* film, they also received a release of the film on a format that existed in the U.S. but never saw a *Star Wars* film release on our side of the pond. The format in question was Sony’s Universal Media Disc (UMD), used with PlayStation Portable (PSP) handheld video game systems.

⁵⁴ It was rated “6” under the Dutch Kijkwijzer system, overseen by the Netherlands Institute for the Classification of Audiovisual Media (NICAM). This meant that the film was not recommended for children under six years old.



The Clone Wars
(UK UMD, 2008)



Disc label (through standard UMD casing)

This optical disc format was only about 2.51 in. (6.4 cm) in diameter, even smaller than the MiniDVD format (3.15 in. or 8 cm in diameter). Discs were always held in an outer, plastic casing, making them a bit odd among other media disc formats. (Heck, even the caddies for vinyl CEDs and VHDs had released the discs for playback, rather than remaining attached to the discs when played.)

A single-layer UMD could hold 900 MB of data, while a double-layer UMD could hold 1.8 GB. This allowed for significant storage on a small disc that was primarily used for PSP video games. Region coding was a bit unusual in that UMD video games were typically region-free, while UMD video content was often region-locked. However, this UK copy of *The Clone Wars* was region-free (or “ALL” as the disc and case proclaimed).

Packaging used the same version A poster art as the American DVD release, and the disc label, visible through the casing, featured a wide version of the same artwork.

This release hit the UK as the format neared the midpoint of its life cycle. It had been introduced alongside the PSP in 2004, just four years earlier, but it would only last until the PSP itself was discontinued in 2014. Still, it is interesting to see that Warner Home Video was willing to experiment with UMD in the UK but not in the U.S.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ The U.S. *did* see a UMD release of *Family Guy: Blue Harvest*, a *Star Wars* parody

Meanwhile in Australia (2008)

In America, physical bonus items for *The Clone Wars* tended to be books. In Australia, fans had the option of a bonus item that could let fans show off their fandom on their bodies. Down under, the two-disc DVD version of the film (with disc labels similar to the equivalent U.S. release) was available in a case that used the version A poster art that the U.S. had used for the single-disc DVD release. No slipcover was included, but the case bore a sticker that indicated the bonus content inside: a tattoo sheet!

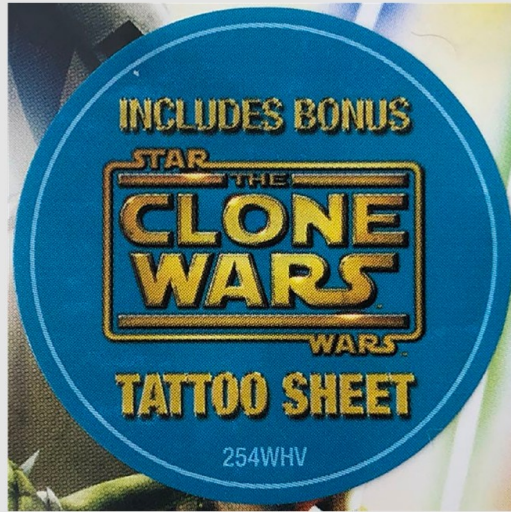


The Clone Wars (Australian DVD, 2008)

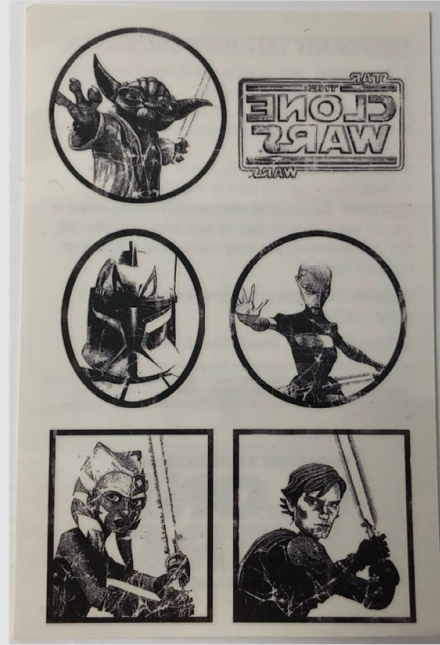
Okay, so they weren't *real* tattoos, but actually examining the content and its instructions revealed that these were a set of six temporary tattoos on a single sheet (with art "backwards" due to how temporary tattoos worked). Images included: the film's logo; three characters in circular frames (Yoda, Rex, and Asajj); and two characters in rectangular frames (Anakin and Ahsoka). This was a form of bonus item that the U.S. has not

released through 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment.

seen for any *Star Wars* releases.



Sticker on packaging noting bonus



Temporary tattoo sheet

Letterbox Strikes Back (2009)

The Clone Wars television series premiered on Cartoon Network on Oct. 3, 2008. Its first season ran until Mar. 20, 2009, but it would not arrive on home video as a season set until Nov. 3, 2009, about one month after the second season had already premiered. Fans of the show could, for the first time, purchase digital copies of the episodes shortly after airing through providers like iTunes, including the ability to purchase a “season pass.” Still, though, many fans wanted episodes on physical home media, and parents were eager to purchase physical copies for their children as well.

The result was a pair of DVD releases (without Blu-ray equivalents) that arrived on the U.S. market in Mar. and Sept. 2009, prior to the premiere of the second season on Cartoon Network. The first of these was entitled *A Galaxy Divided*⁵⁶ and released on Mar. 24, 2009. This single-disc release included the first four episodes of the first season: “Ambush;” “Rising Malevolence;” “Shadow of Malevolence;” and “Destroy Malevolence.” The disc came in a standard DVD case that featured artwork of Yoda in the

⁵⁶ Not to be confused with *An Empire Divided*, the subtitle for the original 2003 release of the *Star Wars Galaxies* video game.

right foreground with Anakin behind him and Obi-Wan behind Anakin, then General Grievous and Asajj Ventress in the background to their left. This release also included a cardboard slipcover of identical artwork, which typically bore a sticker stating, “As seen on Cartoon Network.” The disc label for this regular version featured Grievous, Yoda, and Rex.

Meanwhile, three retailer-exclusive variants were released. Walmart’s exclusive included an extra episode, “Downfall of a Droid” (the sixth⁵⁷ episode of the first season). This release could be recognized by an “Only at Walmart” sticker on the slipcover (but not the DVD case underneath) and by its alternate disc label that replaced Yoda and Rex with R2-D2 and a member of the Coruscant Guard, respectively. (Fans seeking this variant disc who are not picky about original packaging will most easily find this five-episode version in *The Clone Wars 3-Pack*, released in 2013, which will be discussed later in this chapter.)



Label comparison:
Walmart exclusive (left) vs.
regular version (right)

Best Buy also released a variant of *A Galaxy Divided*. No extra episodes were included, making the disc identical to the standard retail version. Instead, this exclusive variant (noted as such by a sticker on its slipcover but again not on the DVD case) included a yellow and green embroidered patch that featured a silhouette of Yoda.

⁵⁷ Why not the fifth episode instead, so that the DVD could contain the first five of the season? The fifth episode to air was “Rookies,” which was already coming later that year in *Clone Commandos*. It would have been redundant (as if that would necessarily have stopped them from doing it).



Left: DVD case (without slipcover) common to all three versions

Right: Yoda patch exclusive to the Best Buy version

Toys “R” Us also released an exclusive version of *A Galaxy Divided*. This version included the regular, four-episode disc and a fold-out poster, featuring Anakin, Obi-Wan, and Ahsoka over Rex and other clone troopers. This release was also easily identified by a sticker on its slipcover, which proclaimed it as only available at Toys “R” Us and that there was a “bonus collector’s poster inside!”⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Of the three variants, the Walmart version is relatively common. The Best Buy variant is pretty rare. In fact, as of this writing in 2020, I have only ever seen five of these intact. The Toys “R” Us version is extremely rare. I have only ever seen a single intact copy of that release. Fortunately, it was the one that came into my collection from Matthew Frey’s generous donation in 2020, so I am able to include images of it in this guide. (One without a slipcover – but with an intact poster – also joined fellow collector James Snow’s collection shortly thereafter.)

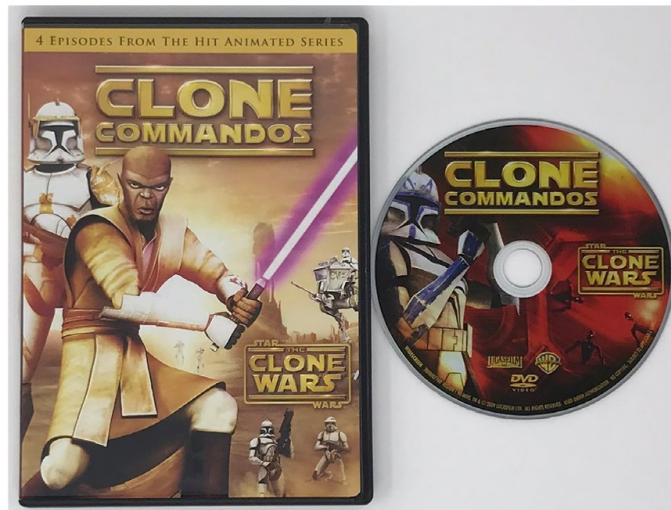


The Clone Wars: A Galaxy Divided (DVD, 2009)
Top: standard version (left); Walmart exclusive (right)
Bottom: Toys “R” Us exclusive (left); Best Buy exclusive (right)



Toys “R” Us exclusive poster

On Sept. 15, 2009, a second four-episode DVD was released, entitled *Clone Commandos*. This single-disc release included the episode “Rookies” and the entire Ryloth arc (“Storm Over Ryloth,” “Innocents of Ryloth,” and “Liberty on Ryloth”), episodes 5 and 19 – 21 of the first season. Unlike *A Galaxy Divided*, this release had neither a cardboard slipcover nor exclusive variants. Case art featured Mace Windu with clone troopers, one of whom was aboard an AT-RT. The disc label featured Captain Rex in front of a dark red background with shadowy commando droids lurking about.



The Clone Wars: Clone Commandos (DVD, 2009)

The two biggest downsides to these releases were the lack of any bonus content (except a trailer for the video game *The Clone Wars: Republic Heroes* on the *Clone Commandos* disc) and the format chosen for the episodes. *The Clone Wars* was produced in a theatrical 2.35:1 aspect ratio, that of a typical widescreen movie. However, the show aired in a 16:9 (or 1.77:1) aspect ratio for Cartoon Network, allowing it to fill the height of a typical 16:9 widescreen television and to have less “dead space” above and below the picture if viewed on a standard definition 4:3 television. (This was the same format released through iTunes and other digital outlets.) As a result, some of the picture was lost. It would thankfully be restored for the season sets on DVD and Blu-ray. For *A Galaxy Divided* and *Clone Commandos*, though, the episodes were presented not just in the Cartoon Network aspect ratio but also in letterboxed form. This meant a 4:3 picture with black bars built into the picture above and below the 16:9 video, rather than being added automatically by a television or player. As a result, these releases caused the same frustrations for fans viewing on widescreen televisions as the 2006 “unaltered” *Original Trilogy* bonus discs: black bars above, below, and to both sides of the picture, resulting in a smaller viewing area.

Needless to say, these were not the best way to present *The Clone Wars*,

and most fans waited for a true season set in hopes of a better presentation. They would not be disappointed.

For a More Digital Age (2008 – 2009, 2019)

The Clone Wars was the first *Star Wars* series of any kind to be released for digital purchase shortly after airing or to have a “season pass” offered through venues like iTunes to essentially preorder a season and then gain access to episodes as they were added, rather than paying per episode or waiting to buy a season after every episode was already released. Unfortunately, by being released immediately after airing, these were 16:9 (1.77:1) aspect ratio copies, not the theatrical widescreen 2.35:1 aspect ratio versions later released on home video.

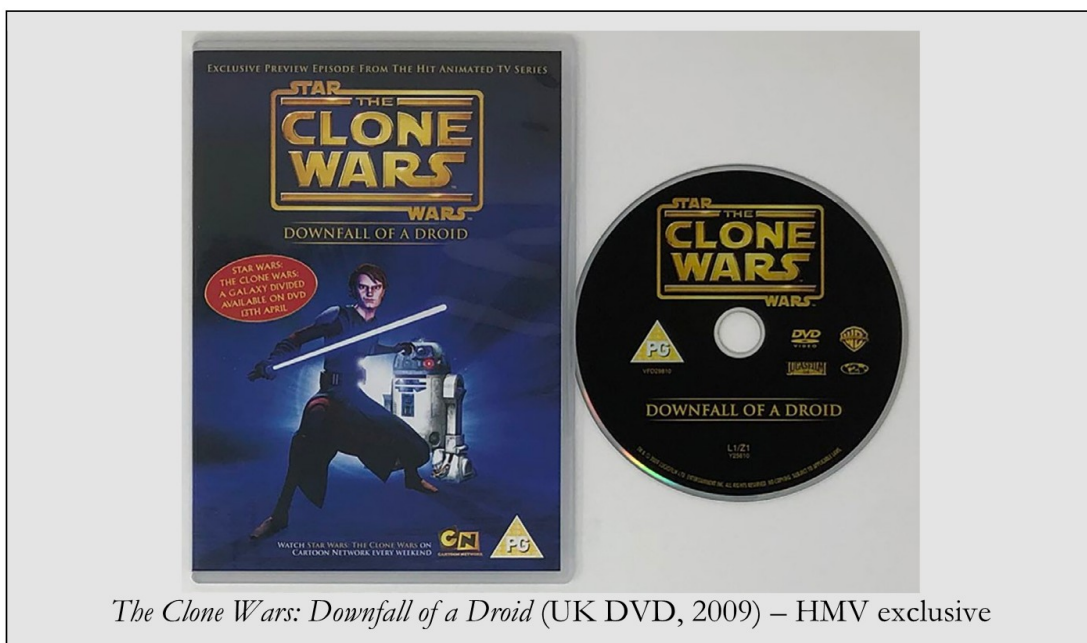
Also disappointing in retrospect (but not an expectation at the time), no new digital bonus materials were included with the individual episodes or season pass.

Along with the rest of the series (except the seventh season), this season was included at launch on Disney+ when it premiered on Nov. 12, 2019. Episodes on the streaming service were identical to the physical season set.

Meanwhile in the United Kingdom (2009)

In the UK, retailer HMV offered a special “preview” DVD for *The Clone Wars* in early 2009. This Region 2 DVD included the aired, 16:9 version of the episode “Downfall of a Droid” with no menu system at all. It came in a clear, slim case with Anakin and R2-D2 on the cover, no interior artwork, and a relatively plain, black disc label. The intent of the DVD, as made clear by its cover, was to promote the TV series itself (“Watch *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* on Cartoon Network every weekend”) and upcoming multi-episode DVD releases (“*Star Wars: The Clone Wars: A Galaxy Divided* available on DVD 13th April”).

I find it interesting and somewhat fitting that the episode used here to promote *A Galaxy Divided* was “Downfall of a Droid,” the same episode that Walmart added to their exclusive version in the U.S. to drive people to purchase their variant. This was perhaps due to “Downfall of a Droid” having at one time been meant to be the first episode (or perhaps second, after “Ambush”) of the series, as evidenced by early tie-in materials like *The Clone Wars: Lightsaber Duels* that used an order of episodes that was later abandoned in favor of the eventual aired order (which itself was later superseded by the correct chronological order).



The Clone Wars: Downfall of a Droid (UK DVD, 2009) – HMV exclusive

Meanwhile in Australia (2009)

While the U.S. was sampling TCW on home video in thematic volumes, Australia got a head start on a proper series release on June 30, 2009. Prior to any kind of complete season boxed set, Warner Home Video launched the first two in a series of four single-disc DVD releases to bring the first season of TCW home. Each “volume” consisted of five or six episodes.

Season 1, Volume 1 included the first five episodes in a clear DVD case (without a slipcover) with art that closely resembled the American cover art for *A Galaxy Divided*. The disc label also resembled the standard U.S. label for *A Galaxy Divided*.

Season 1, Volume 2 included the next five episodes in similar packaging. Cover art featured Kit Fisto, Ahsoka, and R2-D2 in front of Grievous and battle droids. The disc label followed a similar style to that of the first volume (and thus *A Galaxy Divided*) with the characters shown being C-3PO, Luminara Unduli, and Asajj Ventress.

Three months later, on Sept. 22, 2009, two more volumes arrived to complete the first season's initial release in Australia.

Season 1, Volume 3 raised the episode count to six and featured cover art with Obi-Wan in the foreground, Ahsoka Tano and Aayla Secura behind him, and a quartet of Hondo Ohnaka, Turk Falso, Shahan Alama, and Dooku to the side in the background. This time, the disc label featured Ahsoka, Aayla, and Dooku.

The final volume (*Season 1, Volume 4*) included the last six episodes of the season. Package art featured Cad Bane and Nuvo Vindi in the foreground with Mace, Obi-Wan, and Anakin behind them off to the other

side. The disc label included Numa, Cham Syndulla, Wat Tambor, and a pair of B1 battledroids.

Since these volumes were released prior to the later *The Complete Season One* set, they were the aired versions of the episodes, which meant that they did *not* include the Director's Cuts of the seven episodes that would be updated for the season set. Therefore, unlike in the United States, Australia and other regions that took the same approach were able to have the aired version of “Lair of Grievous” on physical media, rather than just digitally. Being the aired versions also meant that they were in the 16:9 aspect ratio. This was helpfully noted on the back of the packaging, which noted the content as “Widescreen, 16:9, 1.85:1 Fullframe, Colour.”

One should also note that due to their release timing, these discs also had their own (rather dull) menu art, instead of matching the eventual season sets.



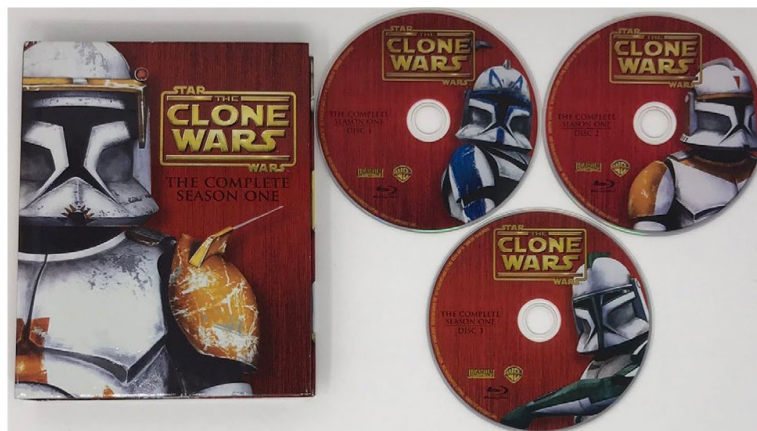
The Clone Wars: Season 1, Volumes 1 – 4 (Australian DVD, 2009)

Of course, these would only be playable on a Region 4 or region-free DVD player, but they made an interesting little niche in *The Clone Wars* home video collecting and would also form the basis for a rather broken approach taken by the UK with similar releases in the years to come.



The Clone Wars: Fancy Schmancy Edition (2009)

On Nov. 3, 2009, *The Clone Wars: The Complete Season One* was finally released on DVD and Blu-ray. This initial release of the season came in a “digibook” format, which held the discs inside a red package that resembled a hardback book. In this case, a booklet of concept art and information about disc content was built into the packaging, making this a hybrid book and home media container. Commander Cody graced the cover. This was the first digibook *Star Wars* release in America, predating *The Complete Saga* in a somewhat different digibook form by two years.

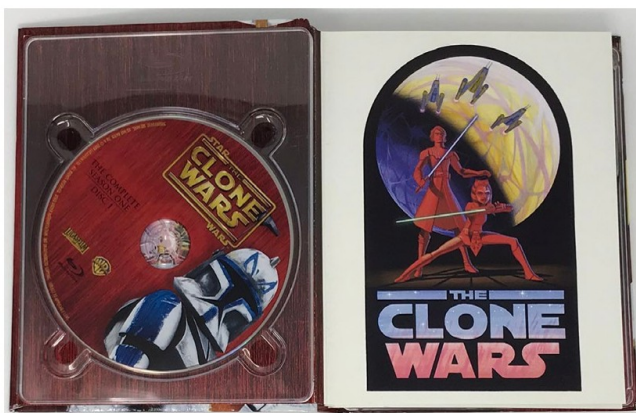


The Clone Wars: The Complete Season One
(Blu-ray, 2009)

The Clone Wars: The Complete Season One
(DVD, 2009)



For both releases, the episodes were presented in their original 2.35:1 “theatrical widescreen” aspect ratio instead of the 16:9 (1.77:1) Cartoon Network aspect ratio. The sets included the remarkable bonus of a short featurette for every single episode. Blu-ray’s expanded capacity also allowed that set to include the *Jedi Temple Archives*, an expanded set of background information and visuals. (More on *Jedi Temple Archives* in a moment.) Even better, this set boasted “Director’s Cuts” of seven different episodes, reinserting footage that was cut for television broadcast. The episodes affected were “Rising Malevolence,” “Shadow of Malevolence,” “Rookies,” “Lair of Grievous,” “Storm Over Ryloth,” “Innocents of Ryloth,” and “Liberty on Ryloth.” It is interesting that those episodes were chosen, since all except “Lair of Grievous” had appeared earlier in the year in their original form on either *A Galaxy Divided* or *Clone Commandos*, making “Lair of Grievous” the only one never released on physical home media in its aired form in the U.S.



Interior view (Blu-ray version)

Notice the booklet attached at the spine of the digibook packaging.

The changes for these Director’s Cuts have been less well-documented than the changes made for the various cuts of the live action films, so they bear noting here (see sidebar). Be warned: changes were far more extensive than for any of the previous television releases we have seen thus far.

Minutiae abounds!

Changes for Better and/or Worse:

***The Clone Wars: The Complete Season One* (2009)**

“Rising Malevolence”

“Rising Malevolence” now includes a retort from Ahsoka after Anakin admonishes her to speak when spoken to. She now replies, “Don’t I always?” and receives a sneer in return.

After Dooku orders all life pods destroyed, Grievous now gives a maniacal laugh.

An entire additional scene featuring Obi-Wan and Admiral Wullf Yularen discussing Anakin’s “redeployment” now comes after the *Twilight* jumps to hyperspace.

An additional flyby of the *Twilight* has been added before Anakin reminds Ahsoka that they may find something they don’t want to find.

The transmission from Obi-Wan now includes an extra line: “A rescue mission, I suppose.”

Plo Koon offers an extra line of encouragement to his clones: “This is a difficult situation, but there remains a possibility we *will* survive.” A clone also now replies, “That’s good enough for me. Come on, let’s go!”

After Anakin admits that he does not know why he, Ahsoka, and R2-D2 are not finding anything in the debris field, there are now extra shots both inside and outside the *Twilight*.

Upon seeing Plo Koon on top of one of the escape pods, one of the battledroids now asks, “What’s a Jedi doing out here?”

When Plo begins his attack on that group of battledroids, one of them now urges the others, “Take cover!”

Just before the droids decide to “put the squeeze” on the clones, one trooper now complains that he cannot get a clear shot.

An additional exterior shot and a repeat of Ahsoka’s call to the escape pod now join the scene in which her call is heard.

In the original version, Plo Koon begins shutting down power systems on the *Twilight*, then the next shot shows the ship coming to a stop. Now, a shot of Ahsoka also turning off systems comes between the two shots.

Ahsoka’s final line of the episode, “Right beside you, Master,” is now altered to say, “Right beside you, Skyguy⁵⁹.”

⁵⁹ Argh! Hate. Those. Nicknames.

“Shadow of Malevolence”

“Shadow of Malevolence” actually begins with a change. Its original “fortune cookie” read, “Easy is the path to wisdom for those not blinded by themselves,” but the new version trades “themselves” for “ego.”

After Anakin tells the assembled clones that their target is the bridge and General Grievous, we now see the clones chatter as a group before continuing with the aired lines, “The head clanker? Skywalker’s getting pretty ambitious.”

The end of the same briefing is now extended. Originally, Anakin tells the clones, “We destroy Grievous, we can bring the war to a quicker end,” then he orders, “Pilots, prepare your bombers,” and the briefing ends. In the Director’s Cut, those lines are delayed. Instead, Anakin first says, “We destroy General Grievous, and the ship will fall with him. Any questions?” Two clones speak up (“Just tell us where that metal-head is, sir.” “Yeah, we’ve been waiting for a chance to take him out.”), and Anakin replies to them (“All right, men, settle down. This is an important mission.”). The scene then picks up with the original Anakin line where it left off from the aired version.

After the briefing, the *Malevolence*’s attack on Republic ships now contains longer shots and an extra pair of lines. A battledroid now says, “You’ve got them on the run,” to which Grievous replies, “Ah, they won’t get far,” before he orders the plasma rotors charged.

The last change is a simple transition. A regular fade-out/fade-in transition into showing the *Malevolence* in hyperspace is now a left/right wipe.⁶⁰

“Rookies”

“Rookies” includes an early shot that is extended between the rookies all exclaiming, “Sir, yes, sir!” and a shot of Obi-Wan looking out a viewport in contemplation.

The “meteor shower” that brings the battledroids now contains an extended shot that shows two more impacts.

After a commando droid is ordered to open the outer outpost doors and replies, “Roger, roger,” we now have a shot of the droid actually working on the control panel before moving back to the clones inside.

⁶⁰ A random, unnecessary transition change? What did they think this was, *Revenge of the Sith*?

After the droids find the outpost seemingly cleared out, the original version moves immediately to the Separatist fleet. The Director's Cut extends the scene with one droid telling the lead droid, "Four clones escaped, captain." The leader replies, "They don't matter. Hard-wire the all-clear signal and contact General Grievous."

A shot of a commando droid moving a crate during the ambush on Rex and Cody is slightly extended.

A shot of the attacking droids is added before the shot in which Rex and Cody realize they are cut off.

When the clones finally get back into the outpost, the original version shows a shot of them starting to run inside toward the camera, then moves to an overhead shot as they stop running. The Director's Cut adds a side view shot of them running down the hallway for a few seconds.

After retaking the command area, a clone now examines a fallen commando droid and asks, "Not so tough now, are ya, Sparky?"

Before Grievous tells a droid that the base cannot be allowed to alert the Jedi, he now has an additional line: "We can leave nothing to chance."

The retreat to the ops center now includes extended shots and an extra shot of Hevy with his blaster cannon.

Moments later, after Hevy is injured and retreats, a new shot comes after Rex (on the comlink) urges him, "Respond!" In the new shot, Hevy is shown in close-up as Rex continues, "Talk to us!"

After the clones note that they have succeeded thanks to Hevy and recognize incoming Republic gunships, the shot of the gunships landing is now slightly delayed to allow Rex another line: "We're getting off this crater, boys."

"Lair of Grievous"

"Lair of Grievous" now features more clone chatter ("You smell that? Doesn't smell like droids to me," and "It's too dark to see anything.") during an extended walk from the entrance.

While Kit Fisto and Nahdar Vebb are battling an early group of battledroids, the droids now banter ("Have you ever killed a Jedi?" "No, never." "Me neither.") and the last droid destroyed by Nahdar says, "Don't even think about it, Republic dogs," before being bisected.

After Grievous (via hologram) says that his home has been prepared for uninvited guests, Nahdar now says he has a bad feeling about this.

After Nahdar's death, Grievous now asks "Do you hear me?" twice (instead of just once) when calling out Kit.

Finally, an extra shot from in front of Kit has been added as he exits, just before he calls to his droid, R6-H5.

“Storm Over Ryloth”

The entire Ryloth arc receives Director’s Cuts, starting with “Storm Over Ryloth.”

An entirely new scene is added between Wat Tambor’s comment that the Republic cannot be allowed to invade and a shot of the troops preparing to launch. This new scene shows the *Resolute* and its crew as it emerges from hyperspace and Yularen orders shields raised.

The scene in which Ahsoka prepares to launch is extended. Originally, she tells her droid, R7-A7, that this is her first squadron command and of her desire to make a good impression, to which the droid replies in beeps before lifting off. In the extended version, she now replies to the droid, “Of course I’m not nervous!” Anakin then arrives and has a brief conversation with her before she launches.

The launch of the starfighters now also includes a shot from inside Ahsoka’s cockpit that was not present originally.

As the starfighters approach the Separatist ships, Mar Tuuk now says, “Commander?” to which a battledroid replies, “Yes, Captain?” before he orders (as before), “Launch all fighters.”

The actual launch shot of the vulture droids is slightly extended as well.

Between when Ahsoka thanks Admiral Yularen for clearing her starfighters for their mission and dives in with a “Here we go,” there is now extra dialogue. Ahsoka now tells Yularen, “Keep the cruisers back until we’ve softened them up.” She asks if R7-A7 is ready for some action, and the droid responds. She reaches out to her pilots, saying, “Axe, keep your squadron back and wait for my signal.” He replies, “You’ve got it, boss.”

As they dive into battle, the scene is now extended to include more shots (including a nice one looking over the dome of R7-A7) and more dialogue (“Alright, boys, let’s clear a path,” to which Axe replies, “Right away, sir.” She then tells them to pick their targets.).

An extra establishing shot of the Separatist ships is shown before moving inside the command ship after Axe says, “Let’s get dirty!”

When it becomes clear that Ahsoka is not turning her ships around, Yularen now asks Anakin, “Did you train her not to follow orders?”

Ahsoka now also urges her pilots, “Come on, boys, stay in formation,” after checking on Axe, who is then shown to have ships on his tail in the next shot.

Before exclaiming that “They’re breaking our lines,” Yularen now states, “We’re far too outnumbered.”

Before telling Yularen “We’re almost there,” Ahsoka is now a bit snippy (ugh, that nickname), mouthing off, “Cool your jets, Admiral.”⁶¹

As Anakin slips under a starfighter for repairs, the shot of Ahsoka is slightly extended over Anakin’s dialogue.

As Anakin briefs everyone on the next attack, Rex now has an extra line, “Try to leave some ships for us, general,” to which Anakin replies, “Will do, Rex.”

Lastly, as the command ship is destroyed, Ahsoka now says, “Skyguy, we are approaching your position,” whereas the original version cut the word “Skyguy” (argh, those nicknames again!).

“Innocents of Ryloth”

“Innocents of Ryloth” now features slightly extended shots when the incoming Republic ships are bombarded from the surface.

As the gunships near the surface, the scene is now extended to include more lines. Obi-Wan now asks, “Who’s up for a challenge? We’re not getting any reinforcements until those guns are out of commission,” to which Waxer replies, “Here we go again.”

A side shot of the arriving gunships after tactical droid TX-20 gloats, “Just as I calculated,” is extended.

Between the initial move of the Republic troops toward the wall and droids on the wall spotting movement, a new scene has been added, in which TX-20 orders his troops to prepare for a ground assault.

As the troops rush toward the wall, a new shot now has Cody order, “Come on, men, let’s go. Go, go, go!”

After Obi-Wan orders Cody to “bring in the troopers on my signal,” there is now an additional segment in which Obi-Wan turns to Waxer and Boil, ordering them to follow him forward, as they do without us seeing the order given in the original.

At the wall, Obi-Wan guides a thrown ion grenade into the correct spot to clear the way in the original. In the Director’s Cut, there is a first try without Obi-Wan’s assistance that does not work because they are too far away, prompting Obi-Wan to order the aforementioned second try that he will help along with the Force.

As Waxer and Boil must hide from a probe droid, the shot when they state this need is slightly extended.

In the aired version, TX-20 checks on the gutkurrs and is told that the

⁶¹ That’s it, young lady. Padawan or no padawan, you’re grounded.

creatures have been starved as per his orders. That ends the scene as aired, but the Director's Cut now shows the reporting droid worried about the creatures, then being used as a test to make sure the creatures will not eat droids.

As Waxer, Boil, and Numa enter Numa's damaged home, shots are extended.

Before a clone tells the others to "aim for their eyes" when fighting the gutkurrs, another clone now says, "They're not stopping!"

When the droid cleaning gutkurr stalls notes that this is the worst job in the entire droid army, he is locked in his cell by Obi-Wan in the original. In the Director's Cut, he now sees Obi-Wan first and notes, "And it just went into overtime."⁶²

Lastly, as Cody's men engage the incoming droids near the end of the episode, a shot is extended.

"Liberty on Ryloth"

As Mace Windu's walkers are charging, new shots are added to provide other views of the incoming walkers, and new droid dialogue is added ("This doesn't look good," then later "Did we get him?").

The scene in which battledroids and super battledroids walk near Mace and his clones' position (and nearly catch them) has now been extended to include the droids noting the "body" of a fellow battledroid. They then compare that old model of droid, which required a TPM-esque central control, to their improved AOTC era models that do not need such a ship.

The launch of the vulture droids from Wat Tambor's base is extended.

Between Cham Syndulla's call for the Twi'leks to free themselves and the slaves being marched near the base, there is now an additional sequence in which droids walk on the energy bridge, then must get off of it before it is deactivated. (One falls.) Wat Tambor then advises tactical droid TA-175 to put the prisoners into the enemy's line of fire, hence why they were being marched out.

The conversation between Mace and Cham before the final battle is extended with new dialogue. Cham notes that it is not enough to enslave and murder the Twi'leks, the Separatists must rob them too.

While Cham's team waits for the droids on the bridge to inspect their

⁶² This line has always annoyed me. It makes no logical sense. How does your job becoming more difficult or dangerous, rather than longer in duration, count as "overtime?" Maybe a "hazard pay" joke would have been more appropriate.

Trojan horse vehicle, shots are extended, as is another right before the droids turn off the bridge while Mace and his men are on it.

In the original version, clone troopers arrive at the bridge control station, and a droid exclaims, "Hey!" before the droids in the room are blasted. In the Director's Cut, the droid now says, "Hey, you're not authorized," to which a clone replies, "Save it!" as they blast the droids.

As Wat Tambor tries to leave, the original simply moves from showing the droids and clones fighting in the control room to Tambor walking outside and seeing his ship stolen. In the Director's Cut, we now see TA-175 walking outside and ordering his droids to "Start my ship," opining, "That Tambor is a fool." Only then does Tambor exit to see it stolen.

Finally, as the Republic starfighters are coming in, Ahsoka's line "That was close, Master!" is now preceded by "Woah!"

All told, this was the season with the greatest amount of added episode content for its season set, though other seasons would have some minor changes as well, usually to restore violence that had been toned down for broadcast (especially impalements or decapitations).

The *Jedi Temple Archives* were also quite impressive. All five of the seasons that aired on Cartoon Network (and were thus released on Blu-ray by Warner Home Video) included this section on every single Blu-ray disc. For this season, content was divided by individual episode. Each episode included sections of 2D Artwork (still images) and 3D Artwork (video content), plus an extra video that played when clicking on the Jedi Order symbol to the upper left of the screen when inside the archives. Disc 1's bonus video was a short featurette entitled *The Voices of the Clone Wars*. The bonus video for Disc 2 was *Show Reel for Crew*. The final bonus video, found on Disc 3, was entitled *Original Version of the Battle Over Ryloth*. All of this archival content added up to a total of 433 images and 172 videos, just in the *Jedi Temple Archives* that were exclusive to Blu-ray.

The DVD release lacked the *Jedi Temple Archives* but had its own quartet of brief, hidden (i.e. "Easter egg") features, accessible from the "Episodes" menu of each disc. On disc 1, selecting "Ambush" and clicking left twice (once to highlight the little "film reel" to denote a featurette and then again to highlight a panel behind Grievous on the wall) and selecting the highlighted panel would play a trailer for the second season of the series. Similarly, moving left twice from "Downfall of a Droid" on disc 2's episode menu to select a wall panel behind Ahsoka would play a trailer for the *Republic Heroes* video game. Disc 3 provided the only non-trailer of these Easter eggs, an animated slideshow (with music) of various pieces of production art, accessible by clicking left twice from "Trespass" to highlight the Jedi Order symbol on Obi-Wan's coat. A third trailer, this time for the

official *Star Wars* website, could be found on disc 4 by clicking left twice from “Blue Shadow Virus” to select one of the lights above Anakin.

Unfortunately, this season set still felt incomplete to an extent. Beginning May 1, 2009, Cartoon Network had aired old episodes of *The Clone Wars* as *The Clone Wars: Decoded*, featuring text-based commentary to expand upon the episodes, albeit mostly with information only unknown to very young or brand new fans. A total of 17 of these *Decoded* episodes were aired (the first 14 episodes of the season, plus “The Hidden Enemy,” “Mystery of a Thousand Moons,” and “Hostage Crisis”). To date, these *Decoded* episodes have never seen home video release, even in a digital form that could be purchased.

Since the Blu-ray release was on three discs and the DVD release on four, it is worthwhile to note that the Blu-ray labels featured Rex, Boil, and Green Leader. The DVD set’s other disc label featured a member of the Coruscant Guard. All featured a red background like the digibook.

At the time, fans wondered if this digibook presentation would persist over the life of *The Clone Wars* or wind up as an aberration for this premiere season. The answer would turn out to be somewhere in between.

Meanwhile in the United Kingdom (2009 – 2010)

The UK received its *The Clone Wars: The Complete Season One* Blu-ray and DVD sets one day earlier than America on Nov. 2, 2009. What’s more interesting, though, was what happened with the first season nearly a year later, on Aug. 23, 2010. On that day, the UK saw a new release of the season as four separate DVD volumes, each consisting of five or six episodes. This was essentially a UK version of how Australia had released the series prior to a season set back in 2009, complete with the Australian menus. With this product line coming *after* the season set in the UK, it was presumably for those who were not willing to buy a more expensive season set but might be inclined to purchase one or more of these cheaper DVD releases.

When compared to the season set, these were considered lower quality releases for both not having a Blu-ray option and including the original, aired versions of the episodes. That meant that the episodes included were 16:9 instead of theatrical widescreen (noted on packaging as “16x9 Full Frame”) and not the Director’s Cuts seen in the season set. Of course, this hadn’t been an issue in Australia, since the individual volumes came months prior to *The Complete Season One*, but it was a bit bizarre to see these substandard versions on shelves in the UK after the superior season set was already available.



The Clone Wars: Season 1, Volumes 1 – 4 (UK DVD, 2010)



Disc labels

Aspect Ratio | 16x9 Full Frame

Aspect ratio notation on case

As with the Australian release, this batch (or at least *Season 1, Volume 2*) deserves some praise by providing the aired version of “Lair of Grievous” (in this case for Region 2) that the U.S. never saw on physical media.

Across the Galaxy

A Galaxy Divided artwork (2009 – 2010)



Use of the *A Galaxy Divided* art in multiple regions – Left to right: *A Galaxy Divided* (U.S.); *Season 1, Vol. 1* (UK); and *Season 1, Vol. 1* (Australia)

Meanwhile in Japan (2009)

In Japan, *The Clone Wars: The Complete Season One* received a fancier treatment than even the American digibook format. A premium “box” release could be found on both Blu-ray and DVD. Discs were essentially the standard Japanese release, held within a digibook. However, this digibook was the size of the American DVD digibook (5.63 in. x 7.56 in.), even for Blu-ray, and it had a different sheen to its exterior. Inside, rather than having the “book” content attached to the spine, it was attached to the interior side of the “front” cover, situated “backward” from an American perspective (i.e. in proper Japanese reading form). Text in the book, on the disc labels, and on the digibook exterior was all English.

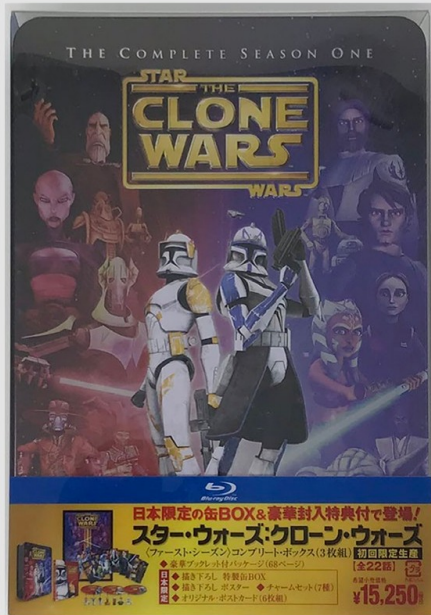
That digibook was then placed within a large collector’s tin (6.06 in. x 8.75 in. x 1.81 in.) that featured Cody and Rex prominently in the middle of two colored areas, a red region with villainous characters to the left and a blue region with heroic characters to the right. Also within this tin were

several physical goodies. The first was a set of six 4.13 in. x 5.81 in. art cards (labeled as postcards) that featured the artwork from the individual DVD volume releases in Japan. The first was essentially the cover art for *A Galaxy Divided* in the U.S. (or *Season 1, Volume 1* in places like the UK and Australia). The other five each featured a single character to the right (R2-D2, General Grievous, Obi-Wan Kenobi, Anakin Skywalker, or Cad Bane) and three images to the left from episodes in the season.

The next physical bonus item was a fold-out poster (10.63 in. x. 15 in.) that featured Rex and two clone troopers in the foreground with heroes to the left, villains to the right, and the series logo above all.

The set also included a cardboard layer that held seven tiny busts of characters from the series. (The busts included small loops, suggesting they might have been used as keychains.) R2-D2 and Yoda were included in full body sculptures, while busts of C-3PO, Anakin, Obi-Wan, Ahsoka, and a clone trooper included their heads, shoulders, and a small amount of their upper torsos. Busts ranged from 1 – 1.25 in. in both width and height.

Whereas all of the home video and bonus items fit within the collector's tin, the tin itself was placed within a plastic protector that included information about the product on the lower third of the front, along with full product art on the back and both sides. It was on this plastic packaging that Japanese text could be found, along with the price of 15,250 yen.



The Clone Wars: The Complete Season One
(Japanese Blu-ray, 2009)



Mini-busts in packaging



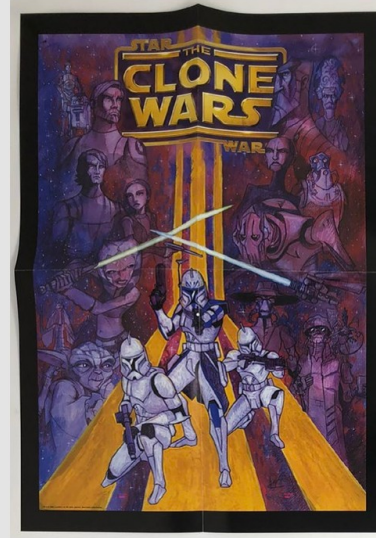
Collector's tin and digibook



Digibook (open) – Note “book” location.



Art cards



Poster

Of Lightsabers and DVDs, Part 2 (2009 – 2010)

In the four years leading up to the premiere of *The Clone Wars* (i.e. 2004 – 2007), Hasbro had been releasing special variants of some of their lightsaber toys that included DVDs labeled as *Bonus Lightsaber Action DVDs*.⁶³ Content had been predominantly based on the *Clone Wars* micro-series. Now, as Lucas and Filoni's *The Clone Wars* emerged to supersede Tartakovsky's series in *Star Wars* lore, Hasbro continued their trend of packaging some lightsaber toys with DVDs, albeit with some twists to the formula this time around.

Released under the title *Lightsaber Battles*, these were somewhat surprising pack-in items. First, they were not full-sized DVDs but instead

⁶³ See the chapter *Genndy Goes Micro*.

MiniDVDs. As the name suggests, these were DVDs that were smaller in both physical size (only 3.15 in. or 8 cm in diameter) and capacity (1.46 GB for single layer or 2.66 GB for dual-layer). Second, they actually included original content in the form of a sort of “clip show” with an overarching theme that was unique to these discs. The same MiniDVD content was released in both 2009 and 2010 with labels and jackets to match that year's *The Clone Wars* lightsaber toys. These were therefore part of the TCW *Red* and *Blue Skies* product lines, respectively.

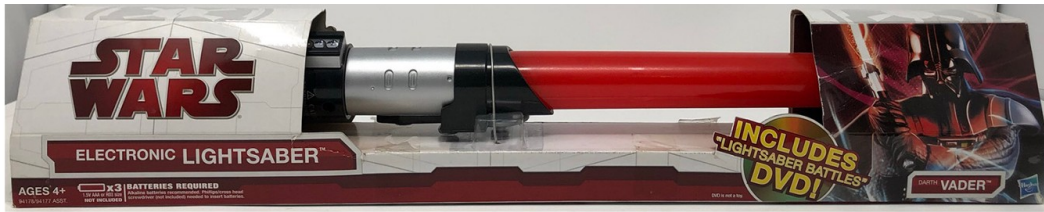


Lightsaber Battles (MiniDVD) – 2009 (left) vs. 2010 (right)

The 2009 version of *Lightsaber Battles* came in a white jacket (which had a flap to keep it closed, suggesting it might be better to call it an envelope than a jacket) with a white background and red text (or text boxes). The front simply included a red *Star Wars* logo, *Lightsaber Battles* title (white text in a red box), the Hasbro logo, and small, black text noting runtime (stated as 15 min. when it was really more like 12 min.), age recommendation (4+), and a reminder that this “DVD is not a toy.” The back of the jacket featured Yoda, the title again, a note of the disc's language (English), and legalese. The disc label included Obi-Wan, the *Star Wars* and Hasbro logos, the disc title, runtime, and legalese (around the edge).



Obi-Wan Kenobi lightsaber toy (including *Lightsaber Battles* MiniDVD, 2009)



Darth Vader lightsaber toy (including *Lightsaber Battles* MiniDVD, 2009) – Notice the lack of TCW branding. The product line was not limited to the TCW series.

In keeping with the toy packaging of its era, the 2010 version updated the jacket to feature white text against black or blue backgrounds. The jacket front was similar in content to 2009, albeit slightly rearranged, while the back was similar to the 2009 jacket back without needing to denote the language this time. The disc label again featured Obi-Wan with his lightsaber but rearranged to better fit the 2010 packaging art style and with far more legalese prominently shown on the disc, rather than just around its outer edge.



Mace Windu lightsaber toy (including *Lightsaber Battles* MiniDVD, 2010)



Darth Vader lightsaber toy (including *Lightsaber Battles* MiniDVD, 2010) – Notice the lack of TCW branding. The product line was not limited to the TCW series.

Putting either MiniDVD into a player brought up a menu (which by itself was notable for existing at all). Seven different battle sequences could be played separately or through a “play all” option. After a Lucasfilm logo and red and white *Star Wars* logo, an opening crawl (centered but not aligned on either side like a traditional opening crawl) repeated Obi-Wan’s dialogue about the lightsaber being the weapon of a Jedi and how the Jedi Knights were the guardians of peace and justice “before the dark time” (without the “s” on “time”). It then showed another title for what we were about to see, a logo that was probably meant to be read as *Star Wars Galaxy Fight Night*, but included the large words “Fight Night” inside a red border

labeled *Star* on the top left and *Wars* on the bottom right with “Galaxy” inexplicably smaller and sandwiched in between “Fight” and “Night.”⁶⁴ A sort of metal gate, emblazoned with the Jedi Order symbol, then slammed shut from top and bottom, only to reopen to show *another* title, this time the same *Star Wars* frame around the title *Lightsaber Battles*.

Once past all of these title screens, the metal gate slammed shut and reopened again to reveal the first set of fighters: Anakin and Dooku. Each was shown on either side of the screen as often seen in boxing match-ups with stats noting their height, weight, and species. The battle number appeared on the screen (e.g. “Battle One” with the number spelled out), and we were finally brought to the action-packed clip for that battle. The lightsaber duel clips shown were interesting in that they were edited to be shorter than their source material and often included new music that somewhat overpowered the dialogue and sound effects. Clips included scenes from both *The Clone Wars* and the live action films, and each battle ended with either a screen declaring a winner or a similar screen stating, “To be continued.”

The match-ups included were (in order of battle number): Anakin vs. Dooku in the TCW film (ending in “To be continued” when Anakin departed); Ahsoka and Luminara Unduli vs. Asajj in the episode “Cloak of Darkness” (also ending in “To be continued” and notable in that Asajj’s species was listed as “unknown”); Yoda vs. battledroids from the episode “Ambush” (Yoda was considered the winner and, as expected, his species was also “unknown”); Obi-Wan vs. Maul in TPM (Obi-Wan was considered the winner, and this scene was notable for *very* different music than the film); Mace vs. Palpatine in ROTS (Mace was considered the winner, since it didn’t include the final outcome); Obi-Wan vs. Grievous in ROTS (“To be continued,” as it didn’t show the final outcome); and Luke vs. Vader in ROTJ (with Luke listed as the winner).

While an oddball, the *Lightsaber Battles* program did adhere a bit more specifically to its theme of lightsaber combat than the content of the *Bonus Lightsaber Action DVDs* that preceded it or, as we will soon see, a different pack-in MiniDVD that would follow *Lightsaber Battles* in 2011.

Toying Around with Walmart and Target (2010)

With the second season of *The Clone Wars* (dubbed *Rise of the Bounty*

⁶⁴ So maybe it’s *Star Fight Galaxy Night Wars*, assuming we were to read the title from top to bottom? Or *Star Wars: Fight Galaxy Night* if we read the border first, then the interior? It’s a rather poorly designed logo.

Hunters) underway on Cartoon Network (Oct. 9, 2009 – Apr. 30, 2010) and a third coming in the fall, Hasbro was already well into production of *The Clone Wars* toys when Walmart had the opportunity to release more exclusive home video items as part of action figure releases. In 2010, Hasbro released three action figure packs based on the *Malevolence* arc. Each included a DVD of one of the episodes from the arc within a cardboard jacket. The first included Plo Koon and Ahsoka Tano with “Rising Malevolence.” The second included Anakin Skywalker and clone pilot Matchstick with “Shadow of Malevolence.” The third included Obi-Wan Kenobi and General Grievous with “Destroy Malevolence.” Unfortunately (but as most toy collectors would’ve expected), the figures in this product line were all repaints or unchanged, repackaged figures, instead of entirely new figures. Plo Koon, Ahsoka Tano, Anakin Skywalker, and Obi-Wan Kenobi were slightly repainted from their 2008 releases, while General Grievous and Matchstick were simply repackaged from 2008 and 2009, respectively.



Left to right: “Rising Malevolence,” “Shadow of Malevolence,” “Destroy Malevolence” action figure two-packs (2010) – Walmart exclusives

None of these DVDs included menus of any kind. The viewer simply put them into a DVD player, and they played a trailer for *The Clone Wars: The Complete Season One* followed by the episode. Unfortunately, as with *A Galaxy Divided* and *Clone Commandos* the previous year, these episodes were in their Cartoon Network 16:9 aspect ratio and letterboxed.

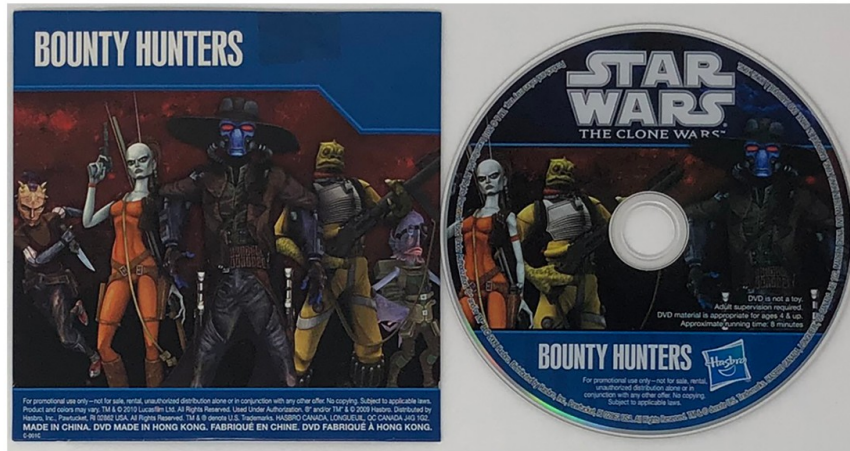


Left to right: “Rising Malevolence,” “Shadow of Malevolence,” “Destroy Malevolence (DVD, 2010) – Walmart exclusive pack-in items

Each disc jacket featured a shot from the episode with its title, Separatist Alliance logo, and legalese in blue areas above and below. The disc labels used the same episode images from the jackets but put them into a central, horizontal region with an image of *The Clone Wars: The Complete Season One* DVD set on the left. The series title was placed in a region above the horizontal strip, while the title, other logos, and legalese were placed in a blue region below the screenshot.

Around the same time, Target also got in on *The Clone Wars* exclusives with a pair of four-figure toy packs that each contained a *Star Wars* DVD. The first pack, based on “Hostage Crisis,” included Shahan Alama, Robonino, and two commando droids. The second included clone troopers Rex, Slick, Chopper, and Gus, and was based on “The Hidden Enemy.” Both included the exact same DVD in a cardboard jacket. The DVD did not include a full episode of *The Clone Wars* this time. Instead, it held an eight-minute video called *Greatest Bounty Hunters*, which started with a message from Cad Bane, then moved into profiles of Jango Fett, Boba Fett, Zam Wesell, Bossk, Zuckuss, 4-LOM, IG-88, Greedo, Cad Bane, Aurra Sing, Robonino, and Hondo Ohnaka. After the profiles ended, there was a message from Rex on the “Republic Alert System,” warning about six bounty hunters on the loose (Bane, Sing, Bossk, Cato Parasitti, and “at least two IG assassin droids”). Again, this DVD contained no menus whatsoever. It is odd to note, though, that while the Walmart DVDs were 16:9 letterboxed and this program was also letterboxed, every clip that the

program showed from the films or TCW was in the their theatrical aspect ratio, rather than 16:9.



Bounty Hunters (DVD, 2010) – Target exclusive pack-in item

Action figure collectors had a bit better luck with these two Target sets. In the “Hostage Crisis” pack, Shahan Alama and Robonino were brand new figures, and the two commando droids, while based on a similar 2009 figure, had unique paint jobs for this set. In the pack based on “The Hidden Enemy,” Rex was just a repaint of a 2008 figure, but the other three were “new-ish.” While not entirely new, Slick was a reworked Echo figure from 2009 with a new helmet. The other two figures, Chopper and Gus, were both “kit-bashed” (i.e. parts from multiple figures combined into a “new” figure) from the aforementioned Rex and Echo figures with repainted heads and new helmets.

For toy collectors, I would also note that these Walmart and Target exclusives were all in the so-called *The Clone Wars Blue Skies* packaging.



“Hostage Crisis” action figure and DVD pack (2010) – Target exclusive



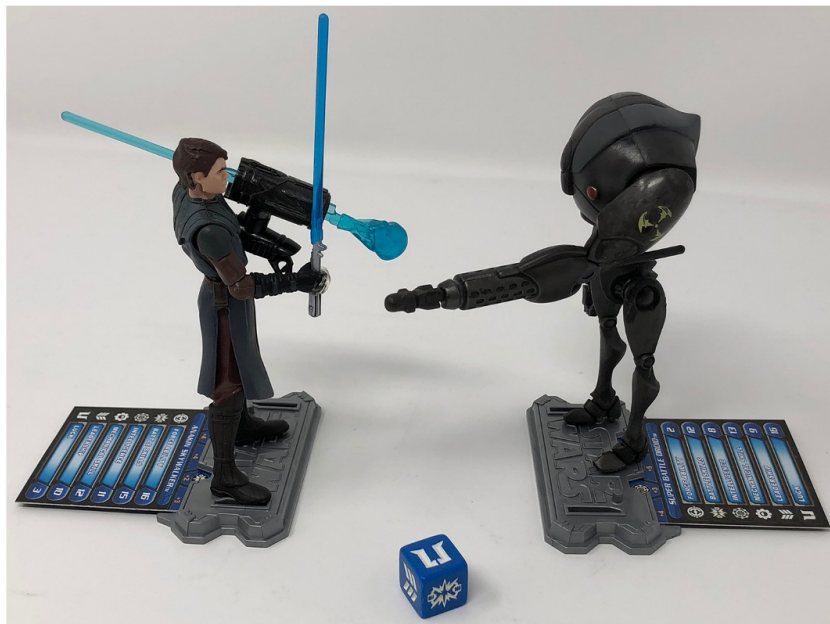
“The Hidden Enemy” action figure and DVD pack (2010) – Target exclusive

Regardless of which package from Target was purchased, the disc and its jacket were identical. The jacket featured (from left to right): Sugi; Aurra Sing; Cad Bane; Bossk; and Robonino. The disc label used the same art by cutting the far edges (no more Sugi, Bossk, or Robonino) and increasing the space between Aurra and Bane to allow the disc's central hole to fall between them. Regions for the title and legalese were added as they were for the *Malevolence* arc discs.

All five of these action figure packs included not just figures and DVDs but also items for use with the *Star Wars Galactic Battle Game*. Each figure came with a small card with individual character statistics on one side and rules for play on the other. Figures were placed on their stands, and cards were then inserted into those stands so that statistics would remain visible. Players would choose an equal number of action figures to battle with in what was essentially a single-elimination combat tournament. Each player would roll a special six-sided die (a “d6” in gaming parlance) and match the resulting symbol to their card to determine the damage dealt to the other player's character. If the symbol was among those at the top of the attacker's card, a bonus would be applied. After both players rolled, the highest attack value won, eliminating the other figure from play and requiring the defeated player to bring in a new character for the next round. The player with the last remaining figure standing won the game. This was a nice way to bring gameplay into figure collecting, though it was only of use to those who actually opened their packs.



Example: The “Shadow of Malevolence” pack included two figures with all accessories for regular play, along with the DVD. The stands could be used for regular play or display, but they could also be used in conjunction with each figure’s *Star Wars Galactic Battle Game* card and the included die to play the game.



Example: Anakin Skywalker vs. Super battle droid (Figures come from the “Weapons Factory” action figure pack from 2010 that we will see below.)



Alternate view of gameplay above – Notice the cards inserted into stands with statistics visible for gameplay.

A New Digibook (2010)

Oct. 26, 2010, saw the release of *The Clone Wars: The Complete Season Two* on Blu-ray and DVD. Like the first season, it was released in a digibook format (this time in silver with Yoda on the cover), but the specifics of the format had been altered. Whereas the previous season had been bound like a hardback book with a booklet built into the packaging, this season was bound like a hardback book but had an insert that merely held a small booklet of concept art and disc information that could be slipped in and out from the top.

The set was again on three Blu-ray discs or four DVDs. The Blu-rays bore labels with Anakin, Obi-Wan, and Ahsoka, while the DVDs added Plo Koon for the extra disc. Characters were shown against a gray background to emulate the silver of the digibook. Once again, the Blu-ray set also included a *Jedi Temple Archives* section that was exclusive to that format.

The *Jedi Temple Archives* were again impressive. Like with *The Complete Season One*, this season's content was divided by individual episode. Each episode included sections of 2D Artwork (still images) and 3D Artwork (video content), plus an extra video that played when clicking on the Jedi Order symbol to the upper left of the screen when inside the archives. Those bonus videos focused on Easter eggs within the episodes or their design. These Easter egg videos discussed Ord Enisence, the Jedi Library, and Malastare, respectively. All of this archival content added up to a total of 223 images and 157 videos, slightly less in sheer numbers than in the first season's set.



The Clone Wars: The Complete Season Two
(Blu-ray, 2010)

The Clone Wars: The Complete Season Two
(DVD, 2010)



Both packages included four arc-specific featurettes (*Magic of the Holocron Episodes*, *Return to Geonosis*, *Creating Mandalore*, and *Attack of the Zillo Beast*) and a pair of video game trailers (*The Force Unleashed II* and *Clone Wars Adventures*).

Unlike the other four seasons of *The Clone Wars* aired during its original Cartoon Network run, none of the episodes in the second season received any kind of alteration for home video, aside from being presented in their original 2.35:1 aspect ratio.

The DVD release lacked the *Jedi Temple Archives* but had its own quartet of brief, hidden (i.e. “Easter egg”) featurettes (three of which were the same as those on the Blu-rays noted above), accessible from the “Special Features” menu of each disc. On disc 1, highlighting the “Main Menu” option and clicking to the right would highlight the right (left to the viewer) side of Ahsoka’s belt. Selecting it would play the Ord Enisence Easter egg. Doing the same on disc 2 will highlight the end of Eeth Koth’s lightsaber hilt to access a 77 sec. featurette on the new Jedi shuttle in the series. (While the other three Easter eggs were found on the Blu-ray as mentioned previously, this one was not.) Doing the same on disc 3 would highlight the

item in Padmé's hand to access the Jedi Library Easter egg. Finally, doing so on disc 4 would highlight Obi-Wan's lightsaber to access the Malastare Easter egg.

This would be the last of the digibooks for *The Clone Wars*.



Interior view of the Blu-ray version (with booklet removed from pocket)

For a More Digital Age (2009 – 2010, 2019)

This season followed the digital release approach of the first, which unfortunately meant that it did not include any new bonus materials when released on iTunes. That would change next season.

Along with the rest of the series (except the seventh season), this season was included at launch on Disney+ when it premiered on Nov. 12, 2019. Episodes on the streaming service were identical to the physical season set.

Meanwhile in the United Kingdom (2010 – 2011)

The UK received its *The Clone Wars: The Complete Season Two* Blu-ray and DVD sets on Nov. 15, 2010, nearly three weeks after the American market. Most noteworthy, though, were products that broke from the American pattern.

In America, we would not see a boxed set of multiple seasons of *The Clone Wars* until the *Seasons 1 – 5 Collector's Edition* in 2013. However, the United Kingdom received multi-season boxed sets *four* times, and sets were available on both Blu-ray and DVD each time. The first of these arrived on

the same day as the second season's own boxed set. This was *The Clone Wars: The Complete Seasons 1 & 2*, which packaged the UK boxed sets of both seasons into a unique slipcover that featured Ahsoka, Anakin, Obi-Wan, and Yoda on its cover against a black background. This pattern would continue each year through the end of the Cartoon Network seasons.



The Clone Wars: The Complete Seasons 1 & 2 (UK Blu-ray, 2010)

On Dec. 6, 2010, the UK began seeing the release of four DVD volumes to encompass the season, very similar to what had been done for the first season. This time, the DVD volumes began arriving much sooner (only about three weeks after the season set instead of nearly a year later) and were staggered, rather than all arriving on the same day. Moreover, since these were based on the season set, not an earlier Australian release as had been the case for the first season, these were identical discs to the DVD season set (albeit with new labels), providing a better viewing experience this time around. (Fans could spot the aspect ratio difference on the back if paying close attention. Whereas the first season's volumes were marked as "16x9 Full Frame," these were listed as "16x9 Letter Box.")

Season 2, Volume 1 included the first four episodes of the season. Cover and disc label art followed similar styles to the previous season, as did the choice of clear DVD cases without slipcovers. In keeping with advertising at the time, the series logo and volume name were in red on the cover art, which featured Cad Bane in the foreground with Anakin, Yoda, Mace, and Obi-Wan behind him to the side. The disc label featured Anakin, Obi-Wan, and Cad Bane.

Three months later, on Mar. 21, 2011, *Season 2, Volume 2* arrived bearing the next six episodes. Cover art included Anakin in the foreground with Rex and Ahsoka slightly behind him, then Poggle the Lesser and other Geonosians behind them to the left. The disc label only featured two characters this time: Ahsoka and Poggle.

On May 30, 2011, two months after the second volume's release, the

third arrived. *Season 2, Volume 3* also included six episodes and featured cover art that included Pre Vizsla in the foreground with a pair of Death Watch members behind him, while Anakin, Obi-Wan, and Satine Kryze stood to the left behind Death Watch. The disc label again featured only two characters: Satine and Vizsla. Interestingly, this volume included an advertising insert and a special, miniature-sized preview copy of the UK's *The Clone Wars Magazine* from Titan Comics, which included, among other articles, the comic story "A Trooper's Tale" by Robin Etherington (originally found in *The Clone Wars Magazine*, Vol. 6.8 in the UK and then in *The Clone Wars Magazine* issue 5 in the U.S.).

Finally, the season concluded with *Season 2, Volume 4* on Aug. 22, 2011. This brought the last six episodes of the season in packaging featuring Boba Fett, Aurra Sing, and Bossk in the foreground with Anakin, Plo Koon, and R2-D2 behind them to the left. The disc label again featured only two characters: Anakin and Hondo Ohnaka.



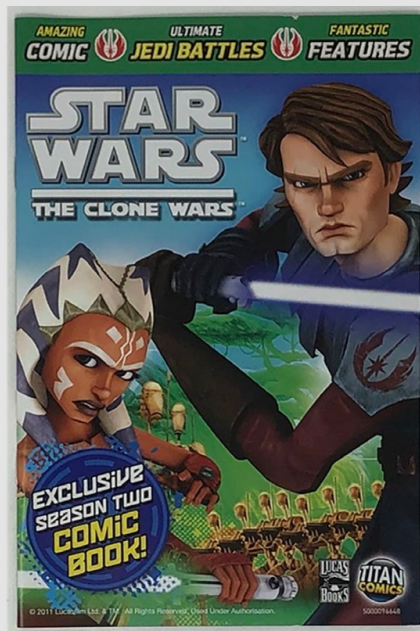
The Clone Wars: Season 2, Volumes 1 – 4 (UK DVD, 2011)



Disc labels

Aspect Ratio | 16x9 Letter Box

Aspect ratio notation on case



The Clone Wars Magazine preview issue included with *Season 2, Volume 3*

Two months later, *The Clone Wars: The Complete Season Three* would be released, but it would not be followed by another set of four individual volumes. *Season 2, Volume 4* was the last of this bizarre series of releases for the United Kingdom.

Meanwhile in Australia (2011)

Unlike with the first season of *The Clone Wars*, Australia did not see individual volumes for the second season prior to the release of *The Complete Season Two*. Moreover, whereas the UK had released individual volumes similar to the Australian batch for the first season about a year after their counterparts down under, the staggered approach taken by the UK for the second season meant that first of the season's four volumes in the UK predated the release of Australia's four volumes this time around.

All four volumes, with content and artwork similar to their UK counterparts (i.e. new labels but identical to this region's discs from the season set), arrived in Australia on Feb. 1, 2011, two months after the UK saw *Season 2, Volume 1* released and seven weeks before the UK received *Season 2, Volume 2*. Releasing all four at once allowed for a makeshift season set to be available on a single day (albeit after a true season set was already available), rather than across eight months as in the UK.

The switch from the previous approach (16:9 episodes prior to the season set's release) to simply repackaging the DVDs from *The Complete Season Two* allowed for a better presentation, as more clearly noted on the packaging as "Widescreen, 16:9, 2.40:1 Fullframe, Colour."

Whereas the practice of releasing four individual DVD volumes would end in the UK after *Season 2, Volume 4*'s release in Aug. 2011, the product line would continue in Australia through the series' fourth season, as we will see as this chapter continues.



The Clone Wars: Season 2, Volumes 1 – 4 (Australian DVD, 2011)



Disc labels



Aspect ratio notation on case

Of Lightsabers and DVDs, Part 3 (2011)

For the seventh time in eight years, Hasbro released *Star Wars* lightsaber toys in 2011 with a pack-in home video item. Like with the *Lightsaber Battles* discs in 2009 – 2010, the new item was a MiniDVD, but the new disc's content and the product it was packaged with changed considerably.

For its 2011 product line (TCW *Blue Skies*), Hasbro retooled some of its Signature Series Force FX Lightsabers (best known for their detailed hilts, light-up, removable blades, and authentic film sound effects) from an earlier premium product line (circa 2009). Whereas the original, more costly lightsabers had metal hilts, the new toys had plastic hilts, which likely cut down production (and thereby retail) costs. Now marketed in less fancy packaging as the “Ultimate FX Lightsaber” line, the toys were sold widely with a few retailer specific variants. One of those variants included a MiniDVD entitled *Force Tech Training*.



Force Tech Training (MiniDVD, 2011)



Sleeve (back)



Notice on packaging (with blade, disc, and jacket visible behind)

The disc was included within its own jacket with a similar front to the *Lightsaber Battles* MiniDVD from the previous year. The jacket's reverse side featured an image of Anakin Skywalker in his early *The Clone Wars* clothing. The disc itself featured a Jedi symbol, its title, and legalese, all with a clear background that allowed the disc's silvery color to show through. Unlike the packaging for pack-in DVDs and MiniDVDs over much of the preceding decade, this time Hasbro made buyers really work to get access to the MiniDVD, if they wanted to keep the product otherwise intact. The MiniDVD was inside its jacket, which was held between the cardboard background and a layer of plastic beneath the lightsaber's blade. The only reliable way to access it without actually tearing up the packaging was to carefully cut through the small, raised area in the plastic around the disc jacket.⁶⁵



Anakin Skywalker Ultimate FX Lightsaber toy
(including *Force Tech Training* MiniDVD, 2011)

Note the small sticker near the end of the blade
that noted that this package included the
MiniDVD.

⁶⁵ Getting to this MiniDVD wasn't quite as much of a pain as assembling the Target RedCard exclusive *Lando's Millennium Falcon* Metal Earth model from 2018, but it was probably the second worst thing for *Star Wars* home video collectors. You might notice the damage to the upper corners of the sleeve in the pictures. That is from needing a pair of needle-nose pliers to remove it from the package.

The disc included a single program, *Force Tech Training*, which was a sort of enhanced “clip show.” After breaking the fourth wall in this supposed in-universe program by welcoming the viewer not to “Force Tech Training” (which might have been the name for the training process itself) but to *Star Wars: Force Tech Training* (which acknowledged the name of the saga that has rarely, if ever, been applied in-universe), Obi-Wan Kenobi took the viewer through a guide to effective combat tactics.

Over the course of about 15 minutes, Obi-Wan narrated as we watched several characters showing off combat moves. The actual moves were shown by what appeared to be character models used for *The Clone Wars* animatics or unfinished story reels (as we'd eventually see with the *Crystal Crisis on Utapau* and *Bad Batch* arcs in 2014 and 2015), rather than finished animations. The characters were shown on a screen that noted their species, height, and weapon on the right, their name at the top, the type of attack being demonstrated at the bottom, and then a window taking up the rest of the screen that showed the character against a blank grid, similar to a deactivated *Star Trek: The Next Generation* holodeck. After a move was demonstrated, the program played a clip from *The Clone Wars* that *sometimes* actually showed the move in action but other times seemed to have no relation whatsoever to the move that was demonstrated, aside from focusing on the same character. (For example, one demonstration had Savage Opress showing a technique with a double-bladed lightsaber, but the clip then showed him using his enchanted blade from Dathomir without ever using a lightsaber in the clip at all. The only connection was that it was Savage in action.) The characters providing demonstrations were likely supposed to be computer simulations in-universe, given that they were animatic-style character models and a mixture of both heroes and villains: Anakin; Asajj Ventress; a generic clone trooper; Cad Bane; Obi-Wan; General Grievous; Captain Rex; and Savage. Something tells me that about half of those characters probably wouldn't have been willing to participate in recording Jedi training material...

This bizarre program was letterboxed with the actual image height (and thus the thickness of the black bars above and below) varying due to the holodeck-esque demonstration segments being 16:9, while the video clips after the demonstrations were all in the theatrical widescreen aspect ratio of the TCW home video season sets.

To date, this was the last lightsaber toy to be released with a pack-in home video item.

Back to Geonosis and Walmart (2011 – 2012)

The Geonosis arc from the second season of *The Clone Wars* received a similar toy release to the *Malevolence* arc from the first season. Once again, Walmart packaged a pair of action figures with a DVD of a single episode

of the arc. The main difference this time was that the discs were put into packages loose, held in place by the packaging itself, rather than having a jacket to keep them safe after the package was opened. On the positive side, these episodes were presented in the 2.35:1 aspect ratio of the season set, rather than a 16:9 letterboxed presentation like the last time episodes were used for toy pack-ins. Strangely, each included a short trailer for *The Clone Wars: The Complete Season Two* on home video, and this trailer *was* letterboxed, despite the actual episode being anamorphic.

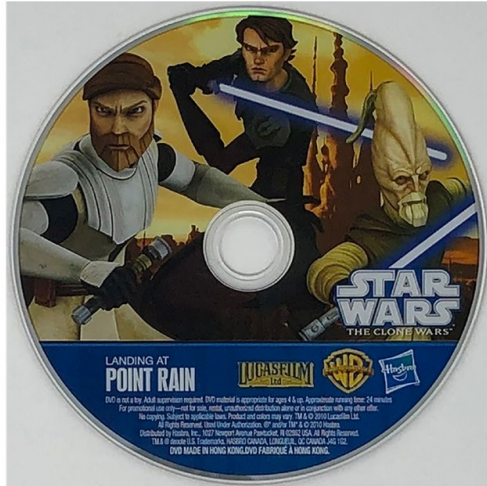
The first pair of these toy packs came in 2011. The “Landing at Point Rain” pack included Obi-Wan and a B1 battledroid, while the “Weapons Factory” pack included Anakin and a super battledroid. Again, these were just slightly repainted figures that had already been released previously. Obi-Wan Kenobi, Anakin Skywalker, and the B1 battledroid were all minor repaints of 2008 figures, while the super battledroid was a minor repaint of 2009’s Heavy Assault Super Battle Droid.



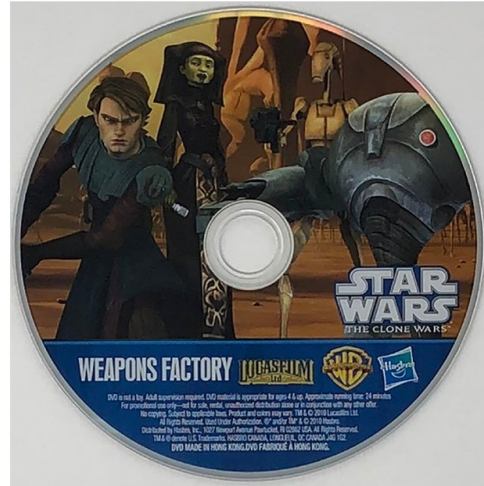
“Landing at Point Rain” action figure and DVD pack (2011) – Walmart exclusive



“Weapons Factory” action figure and DVD pack (2011) – Walmart exclusive



“Landing at Point Rain” (DVD, 2011) –
Walmart exclusive pack-in item



“Weapons Factory” (DVD, 2011) –
Walmart exclusive pack-in item

The second pair of these packs came in 2012, after many fans had given up hope that we would ever see the arc finished in this form. The “Legacy of Terror” pack included another Obi-Wan and a clone trooper, while the “Brain Invaders” pack included another Ahsoka and clone trooper Scythe. Obi-Wan Kenobi and Ahsoka Tano were minor repaints from 2008 (with Ahsoka getting brain worms this time instead of Rotta the Hutt), while the clone trooper with Obi-Wan had a new head on the body of the previously-released Clone Trooper (212th Attack Battalion) body from 2009, and Scythe was a “kit-bashed” combination of Gus from 2010’s “The Hidden Enemy” set and 2008’s Rex.

Disc labels featured a blue region with the title, logos, and legalese below an image that included the series logo on the lower right and three or (more often) four characters. The “Landing at Point Rain” disc label featured Obi-Wan, Anakin, and Ki-Adi-Mundi, but not a B1 battle droid, despite the figure inside. The “Weapons Factory” disc label featured Anakin (again), Luminara Unduli, a Super Battle Droid, and a B1 battle droid. The label for “Legacy of Terror” featured Obi-Wan, a 212th Attack Battalion clone trooper, and a pair of “zombie” Geonosians. The “Brain Invaders” disc label featured Ahsoka, Barriss Offee, Scythe, and Pulsar.

Again, for toy collectors, I would note that these were all in the so-called TCW *Blue Skies* packaging.

This was the last of the action figure pack-in DVDs as of the time of this guide’s publication, as the concept did not reappear again for *The Clone Wars*, nor for any subsequent series.



“Legacy of Terror” action figure and DVD pack (2012) – Walmart exclusive



“Brain Invaders” action figure and DVD pack (2012) – Walmart exclusive



“Legacy of Terror” (DVD, 2012) – Walmart exclusive pack-in item



“Brain Invaders” (DVD, 2012) – Walmart exclusive pack-in item

Digibooks No More (2011)

On Sept. 13, 2011, a little over a month before the release of *The Clone Wars: The Complete Season Three*, both of the series' first two seasons were reissued in simplified packaging that would set the precedent for future season sets. Gone were the fancy digibooks with their booklets (attached or inserted). Instead, these were standard, blue Blu-ray and clear DVD cases, each with a slipcover. Front case art mirrored the original digibook covers, while the booklets were replaced by simple, folding inserts that noted disc

content but did not include the vast wealth of concept art from the original releases.⁶⁶



Blu-ray set comparison – Left to right: TCW S1 (Blu-ray, 2009); TCW S1 (Blu-ray, 2011); TCW S2 (Blu-ray, 2009); and TCW S2 (Blu-ray, 2011)



DVD set comparison – Left to right: TCW S1 (DVD, 2009); TCW S1 (DVD, 2011); TCW S2 (DVD, 2009); and TCW S2 (DVD, 2011)



2011 reissues (e.g. Blu-ray) included folding inserts instead of the original booklets.

⁶⁶ Despite being newer than the digibooks, these appear to be harder to find today than the digibooks. It is particularly difficult to figure out which you are getting from an online seller unless you are sure to ask questions or get actual pictures of the product, rather than just stock images. (Finding copies with intact slipcovers is even more difficult.)

Simple Packaging, Infuriating Extras (2011)

The third season of *The Clone Wars* (AKA *Secrets Revealed*) aired from Sept. 17, 2010, until Apr. 1, 2011. It then saw home video release as *The Clone Wars: The Complete Season Three* on Oct. 18, 2011, about a month after the release of *The Complete Saga* Blu-ray set.

Rather than following the pattern set by the home video premieres of the two preceding seasons, this package (predicably yet disappointingly) followed the pattern of the previous month's reissues of the first to seasons. The set was released in a standard, blue Blu-ray or clear DVD case with a cardboard slipcover, each featuring Anakin against a blue background. No booklet was included, though there was a horizontal fold-out insert to note disc contents. The three Blu-ray discs were labeled with Colt, Savage Opress, and Asajj Ventress, while the last of the four DVDs added Chewbacca.

Once again, the Blu-ray had an exclusive *Jedi Temple Archives* section, while both versions included arc-specific featurettes: *Creating Kamino*; *Hutts and the Underworld*; *Witches and Monsters*; *Secrets of Mortis*⁶⁷; and *Chewbacca Returns*.

The *Jedi Temple Archives* were again divided by individual episode. Rather

⁶⁷ This featurette was absolutely infuriating. Rather than presenting actual "secrets of Mortis," Dave Filoni said, "You'll notice in this boxed set there's no lengthy documentary on the *Mortis Trilogy*. Christian Taylor, who wrote the trilogy, and myself, we both firmly believe that we should really not answer directly a lot of the questions about Mortis." He then listed multiple questions raised by the episodes. "We have answers to those questions for sure, but if I answer directly what something is, I feel that I'll be robbing you of the purpose of that arc, which is to make you wonder, to make you challenge certain ideas, to ask questions." If all you were really going to tell us was that you weren't going to tell us anything, why was it included at all? To add insult to injury, the set's packaging boasted "5 Behind-the-Scenes Featurettes with Director & Crew Interviews," daring to count *Secrets of Mortis* as one of them. To this day, everything about that non-featurette makes me want to throw things (preferably at whomever thought it was a good idea). And don't even get me started on the intellectual dishonesty of Katie Lucas taking credit for the creation of Dathomir and the Nightsisters in the *Witches and Monsters* featurette without ever giving even the tiniest recognition to the actual originator of both concepts, *Courtship of Princess Leia* novel author Dave Wolverton. I harbor a lot of animosity toward this release's bonus features, to say the least.

than referring to sections of images as “2D Artwork” and video as “3D Artwork,” this set referred to the sections more clearly simply as “Images” and “Videos.” Again, an extra video on each disc played when clicking on the Jedi Order symbol in the upper left of the screen. Like with the second season, the three bonus videos focused on Easter eggs within the episodes or their design. These Easter egg videos were entitled *Creating Kamino Easter Egg* (about subtle details in animations), *Witches and Monsters Easter Egg* (about the Republic commandos appearing in “Witches of the Mist”), and *Chewbacca Returns Easter Egg* (about the naming of the Trandoshans in the final arc of the season), respectively, thus sharing the names of the featurettes about the arcs in which those Easter eggs were found. All of this archival content added up to a total of 256 images and 147 videos (more images but less videos than the previous season).



The Clone Wars: The Complete Season Three
(Blu-ray, 2011)

The Clone Wars: The Complete Season Three
(DVD, 2011)



The DVD release lacked the *Jedi Temple Archives* but had its own quartet of brief, hidden (i.e. “Easter egg”) featurettes, accessible from the “Episodes” menu of each disc. On disc 1, highlighting “The Academy” and

moving to the right would highlight the upper clone trooper's back armor panel.⁶⁸ Clicking it would play a short (less than 1 min.) segment with Kilian Plunkett discussing the design of the Gamorrean guards. The other three featurettes match those on the Blu-rays in the *Jedi Temple Archives* when clicking the Jedi Order symbol. On the second disc, highlighting "Pursuit of Peace" and clicking to the right would highlight the tattoo on Ziro the Hutt's eye, which, when selected, played the *Witches and Monsters Easter Egg*. On the third disc, highlighting "Ghosts of Mortis" and clicking right would highlight part of Asajj Ventress' outfit, which, when selected, played the *Chewbacca Returns Easter Egg*. On the fourth disc, selecting "Wookiee Hunt" and clicking to the right selected the collar of Yoda's robe, which allowed playing the *Creating Kamino Easter Egg*.

For a More Digital Age (2010 – 2011, 2019)

For iTunes digital release, the third season of *The Clone Wars* included two featurettes: a look at the third season episodes as each being "mini-movies" due to how they were produced and a sneak peek with Ashley "Ahsoka Tano" Eckstein into what to expect from the second half of the season with Savage Opress.

Of greater note was a feature-length release only found digitally. On Dec. 7 – 9, 2010, the Nightsisters arc ("Nightsisters," "Monster," and "Witches of the Mist") from the third season was released theatrically in eleven cities as a single, feature-length cut. That version, *The Nightsisters Trilogy: Feature-Length Cut*, was never released on physical home media, but it *was* released via iTunes on Dec. 5, 2011, about a year after its brief theatrical run. This digital release included a behind-the-scenes featurette. Strangely, while iTunes displays the correct release date for the featurette, it (even today) shows an incorrect release date of Jan. 12, 2011, for the actual "movie."

Along with the rest of the series (except the seventh season), this season was included at launch on Disney+ when it premiered on Nov. 12, 2019. Episodes on the streaming service were identical to the physical season set. The feature-length *The Nightsisters Trilogy* was not included on Disney+.

Changes for Better and/or Worse:

The Clone Wars: The Complete Season Three (2011)

⁶⁸ It's hard to tell, but I believe it's Echo whose back panel accesses the featurette.

While not advertised as having any extended cuts of its episodes, there was one episode with additional content.

“ARC Troopers”

The extended scene in question was the infamous “ARC Troopers” Asajj Ventress kiss. During the attack on Kamino, Asajj grabs ARC trooper Colt with the Force, choking him, then slams him into a wall, causing his helmet to fall off (somehow). She then draws him toward her and runs him through with her lightsaber. In the aired version, censored for Cartoon Network, he then simply falls to his knees, but in the extended version found on the home video release, Asajj kisses Colt on the cheek (beside but not actually on his mouth) before allowing him to drop to the floor. This was apparently deemed too adult for Cartoon Network and cut from the aired version. (Thank goodness it was only his cheek!)

Changes for Better and/or Worse:

***The Nightsisters Trilogy* (2011)**

Very little changed for *The Nightsisters Trilogy* when three episodes from the third season of *The Clone Wars* were merged into a single film.

“Nightsisters”

The first episode of the arc has its end credits moved to immediately after “Witches of the Mist.”

“Monster”

The second episode of the arc loses its opening quote, *The Clone Wars* logo, and its opening narration that recaps what happened in “Nightsisters.” Its credits now appear between those of “Nightsisters” and “Witches of the Mist.”

“Witches of the Mist”

The final episode of the arc loses its opening quote, *The Clone Wars* logo, and its opening narration that recaps what happened in “Nightsisters” and “Monster.” Its credits now appear after those for “Nightsisters” and “Monster.”

Meanwhile in the United Kingdom (2011)

On Oct. 17, 2011, *The Clone Wars: The Complete Season Three* was released in the UK, one day before its U.S. counterpart. Alongside this season set was another large boxed set that packaged all three of the current season

sets into a single slipcover, labeled *The Complete Seasons 1, 2, & 3*. (In the case of the first two seasons, these were now standards cases.) Stark white cover art featured three heroes on the left (Yoda in front of Anakin in front of Ahsoka) and three villains on the right in the background (Savage Opress, General Grievous, and Asajj Ventress). As with the individual season sets, this package was available on both Region 2 DVD and region-free Blu-ray.



The Clone Wars: The Complete Seasons 1, 2, & 3 (UK Blu-ray, 2011)

Meanwhile in Australia (2012)

Warner Home Video again waited until after a season set was available before releasing a series of four individual DVD volumes for the third season of *The Clone Wars* in Australia on Apr. 3, 2012. Disc content was again identical to the season set. This time, though, there would be no UK equivalents to compare with the Australian releases.

The art style changed for cases and disc labels for this season, making the case artwork similar to the artwork we have seen on the postcards in the Japanese *The Complete Season One* premium boxed set (which used individual Japanese release art). Instead of groups of foreground and background characters on cover art, these included a single character in the foreground to the right with three small screenshots from the season to the left. The logo style (the series logo with the season and volume number beneath) and label at the top to denote how many episodes were included were essentially unchanged. Disc labels, meanwhile, were simple affairs with the necessary title and logos, along with just the same main character image featured on the case art. *Season 3, Volume 1* artwork featured ARC trooper Colt. *Volume 2* featured Jabba the Hutt. *Volume 3* featured Savage Opress. *Volume 4* featured Chewbacca.

This time, the odd numbered volumes each included an even number of episodes (six), while the even numbered volumes included an odd number of episodes (five). This curious pattern, it was obviously not a decision made due to a fun number juxtaposition but instead to make sure that

individual story arcs were not split across volumes.



The Clone Wars: Season 3, Volumes 1 – 4 (Australian DVD, 2012)



Disc labels



Aspect ratio notation on case

Spider-Maul: Homecoming (2012)

The fourth season of *The Clone Wars* (*Battle Lines* in advertising) aired from Sept. 16, 2011, through Mar. 16, 2012. The season ended with the episodes “Massacre,” “Bounty,” “Brothers,” and “Revenge,” which set Asajj on a better path and reunited Savage Opress with Maul before the two set a trap for Obi-Wan.

Similar to the merging of *The Nightsisters Trilogy* into a single film for theatrical release (or how four episodes each of *Ewoks* and *Droids* were brought together into feature-length films⁶⁹), these four episodes were merged and edited to create the feature-length *Darth Maul Returns*, which was released on DVD (with no accompanying Blu-ray or bonus features) on Sept. 11, 2012. Cover art featured Maul, Savage Opress, and Asajj Ventress, though only Maul’s art from the cover appeared on the disc label.



The Clone Wars: Darth Maul Returns (DVD, 2012)

Changes for Better and/or Worse:

Darth Maul Returns (2012)

Whereas this style of sidebar is usually broken into changes made to individual episodes, the way *Darth Maul Returns* was handled requires some deviation from the norm in order to consider the arc (and subsequent feature-length version) as a whole.

To make these combined episodes work better as a single film, the opening narrations from “Massacre” and “Brothers” are combined into a

⁶⁹ See the chapter *Teddy Bears, Towanis, and Trouble Again*.

new opening that sets up everyone's starting points. Like how "Sunstar vs. Shadowstone" was treated for *The Haunted Village* in 1997, the opening of "Brothers," which features Savage rampaging around a diner and then Anakin and Ahsoka discussing current events, is moved to before the beginning of "Massacre" at the start of the feature-length cut.

In essence, that treatment of "Brothers" defines this cut. The rest of "Brothers" is sliced into chunks and inserted into and around the other three episodes so that we get the following (in order): the opening of "Brothers;" all of "Massacre;" a bit more of "Brothers" (up until Maul says he wants revenge); all of "Bounty;" and then "Revenge."

However, this cuts three scenes from "Brothers" that are never reinserted anywhere in this version: Dooku's opening scene (known for the line "Something is rising, something... sinister."); Asajj sensing Savage and talking to Latts Razzi about it; and a final scene at the Jedi Temple during a storm in which Yoda and Obi-Wan sense Maul's return.

Interestingly, the change in scene order subtly altered the context of Mother Talzin's actions. In this cut, when Mother Talzin speaks aloud about how Savage and Maul will soon be together, she is now saying it *before* the massacre on Dathomir, rather than after. She is no longer the last remaining Nightsister trying to use the brothers for her own purposes but instead the leader of a thriving Nightsister clan... trying to use the brothers for her own purposes.

For what it's worth, the aired episode progression and scene order remains the accepted version in both the Story Group's canon and the Legends continuity.

This single DVD release was, thankfully, presented in 2.35:1 anamorphic widescreen, instead of the substandard letterboxed 16:9 presentation of so many of the other single-disc TCW releases. It was originally a Target exclusive but later received a wider release.⁷⁰

Censorship Returns (2012)

The entirety of the 2011 – 2012 season of *The Clone Wars* finally arrived on home video about one month after the release of *Darth Maul Returns*. *The Clone Wars: The Complete Season Four* launched on Blu-ray and DVD on Oct.

⁷⁰ This is referred to as a "timed exclusive," meaning something that is exclusive for a specific amount of time but then sees a wider release after that dictated period of exclusivity expires.

23, 2012. The sets were similar in style to those of the third season (with Maul on the cover this time against a black background), though the insert with disc information folded out into a wanted poster for characters in the *Obi-Wan Undercover* arc (Cad Bane, Rako Hardeen, Moralo Eval, Derrown, and Embo) instead of being horizontal. The three Blu-ray labels included Grievous, Asajj, and Pre Vizsla, while the DVD's extra disc bore Savage. Like usual, the Blu-ray release included a *Jedi Temple Archives* section that the DVDs lacked due to space.

The *Jedi Temple Archives* on each disc were divided into sections by arc, rather than by episode. Disc 1 included sections entitled *The Battle of Mon Cala*, *Gungans and Grievous*, and *Droid Adventures*, plus an extra, slideshow-esque video, *Making of 3D World Magazine Cover*. Disc 2 included sections entitled *Darkened World of Umbara*, *Slaves of Zygerria*, and *Death Watch Unhinged*, plus a separate featurette, *Voicing an Army*. Disc 3 included sections entitled *Obi-Wan Undercover* and *Darth Maul Returns*, plus a bonus video in the form of a *Darth Maul Returns* teaser (for the arc of the show, not the DVD release of the same name). All of this archival content added up to a total of 234 images and 78 videos, just in the *Jedi Temple Archives* that were exclusive to Blu-ray. This was great material, but the total number of images had dropped a bit, while the number of videos had dropped considerably, since the previous season, providing the lowest number of each thus far in any season's *Jedi Temple Archives*.

This time, instead of regular featurettes for individual arcs, both sets included video commentaries for its arcs (*The Battle of Mon Cala*, *Darkened World of Umbara*, *Slaves of Zygerria*, *Obi-Wan Undercover*, and *Darth Maul Returns*). These commentaries were different than the one found on the TCW film Blu-ray. Instead of running the full length of the arcs, these showed creative team members discussing the episodes while they watched but were then abridged to include just the more interesting parts of the conversation and therefore not all of the episodes' content, which played in the corner.

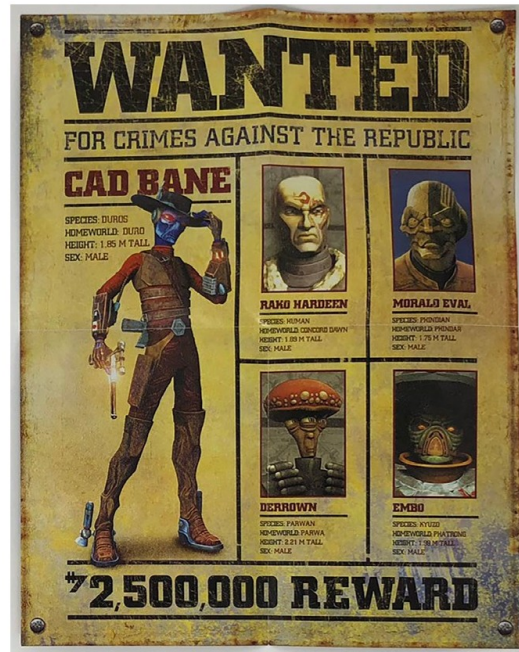
A Saga on Home Video: A Fan's Guide to U.S. *Star Wars* Home Video Releases



The Clone Wars: The Complete Season Four
(Blu-ray, 2012)

The Clone Wars: The Complete Season Four
(DVD, 2012)





Insert folded out into a poster

While not advertised as such, *The Complete Season Four* included some extended cuts, though only in restoring some violence back into the episodes that was removed for Cartoon Network (see sidebar). Personally, I'm glad to see these removed bits restored, given that they could very easily have just been left on the cutting (impaling?) room floor.

Finally, the DVD release, while lacking the *Jedi Temple Archives*, again had its own quartet of brief, hidden (i.e. "Easter egg") items, three of which were the same as clicking the Jedi Order symbol while in each Blu-ray disc's *Jedi Temple Archives* section, which were accessible on the DVDs from the "Episodes" menu of each disc. On disc 1, highlighting "Nomad Droids" and moving to the right would highlight R2-D2's right leg, which, when selected, would play the *Making of 3D World Magazine Cover* video. Doing the same on disc 2 from "Kidnapped" would allow clicking on Rex's chest armor to play the *Voicing an Army* featurette. On disc 3, moving right from "Friends and Enemies" would allow clicking on Cad Bane's holster, which would play a trailer for the season. Finally, doing so from "Revenge" on disc 4 to highlight Savage Opress' amulet would play the *Darth Maul Returns* teaser.

Changes for Better and/or Worse:

The Clone Wars: The Complete Season Four (2012)

"Carnage of Krell"

Two shots are extended to show Krell stab a clone trooper through a

tree, then remove his lightsaber so the clone can fall to the ground.

“Escape from Kadavo”

The cannon that Anakin commandeers is now manned by two Zygerrians. The first gets cut down as in the aired version, but the second is impaled through the back of his chair and removed before Anakin gets into the chair as in the aired version.

“Massacre”

We now see more of Daka's impalement (still seen in the aired version, just not as clearly).

“Bounty”

We now see Asajj impale Oked, rather than having it implied.

We also see the knife Krismo uses to kill Rigosso from a reverse view that shows that he was indeed stabbed all the way through.

For a More Digital Age (2011 – 2012, 2019)

For iTunes digital release, the fourth season of *The Clone Wars* included two featurettes (released in Aug. and Sept. 2011): a sneak peek at the season before its premiere and a brief look at Anakin as the Chosen One.

Along with the rest of the series (except the seventh season), this season was included at launch on Disney+ when it premiered on Nov. 12, 2019. Episodes on the streaming service were identical to the physical season set. The feature-length *Darth Maul Returns* was not included on Disney+.

iTunes also sold a handful of episodes in a thematic pack outside of typical season pass sets of full seasons. The first of these thematic episode packs was 2012's *Jedi Masters*, priced at \$9.99 in SD and \$12.99 in HD. It included the first season episodes “Ambush,” “Rising Malevolence,” “Jedi Crash,” and “Liberty on Ryloth,” along with the second season episodes “Children of the Force” and “Grievous Intrigue.” For the episode pack, the episodes themselves were identical to those previously released through iTunes (i.e. 16:9, original aired versions), just sold in a different assortment.

A second such pack would arrive in 2013.

Meanwhile in the United Kingdom (2012)

The Clone Wars: The Complete Season Four again arrived in the UK one day before the American release on Oct. 22, 2012. For the third year in a row, the season set was accompanied by a new, larger boxed set that packaged all four of the current season sets (on either Blu-ray or DVD) into a single

slipcover as *The Complete Seasons 1 – 4* (finally ditching the ampersand that always seemed a bit odd in the title). In contrast to the white background of the previous set, this time the background was stark black. Cover art featured Yoda and Captain Rex in the foreground with Anakin behind them, while Asajj and Maul were behind them all to the right.



The Clone Wars: The Complete Seasons 1 – 4 (UK Blu-ray, 2012)

Meanwhile in Australia (2013)

As in recent years, Warner Home Video waited until after a season set was available before releasing a series of four individual DVD volumes (with identical content to the season set's discs) for the fourth season of *The Clone Wars* in Australia. All four volumes arrived on Apr. 2, 2013. As with the previous season, there weren't UK equivalents for these products. Moreover, this would be the last time that Australia would see individual volumes for the series. Subsequent seasons would only see release in season sets, if at all.

The art style matched that of the third season, for the most part. The cover and disc label artwork for *Season 4, Volume 1* featured C-3PO and R2-D2 together, rather than a single character⁷¹, while the other volumes

⁷¹ This matched how two of Hasbro's commemorative action figure packs (ANH in

included just a single character: Captain Rex for *Volume 2*; Cad Bane for *Volume 3*; and Maul for *Volume 4*.

The number of episodes per volume again varied (two with six, two with five), this time with the first and last each bearing six episodes, while the middle two each included only five. Unfortunately, this meant that story arcs were split between volumes this time. The *Slaves of the Republic* arc began with “Kidnapped” on *Volume 2* and continued into *Volume 3*, which ended with the first two episodes of the *Obi-Wan Undercover* arc that concluded with its last two episodes at the beginning of *Volume 4*.



The Clone Wars: Season 4, Volumes 1 – 4 (Australian DVD, 2013)

2004 and ROTJ in 2006) counted the two droids as if they were one character. See the chapter *Rise of DVD, Demise of VHS* in *Volume I* for more details.



The Great Home Video Blitz of Oct. 2013 (2013... Obviously)

Oct. 2013 brought one of the single largest *Star Wars* home video “blitzes” of the 2010s. No fewer than *seven* different *Star Wars* home video releases arrived in an eight-day period.⁷² That said, it was really only a wallet-emptying proposition for completists.

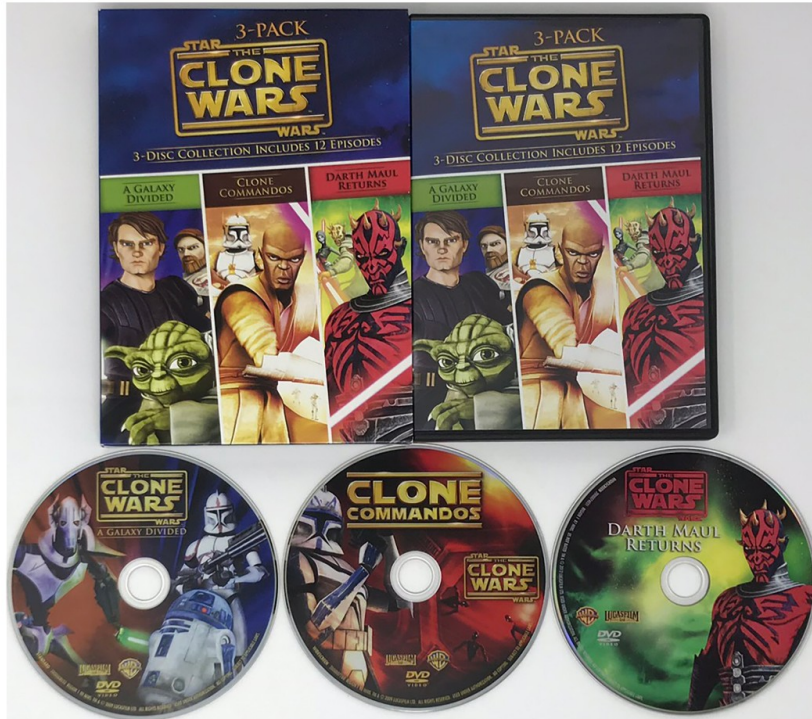
First, on Oct. 8, 2013, the Blu-ray/DVD combo packs for the *Prequel* and *Original Trilogies* were released.⁷³ Just one week later, on Oct. 15, *five* different releases for *The Clone Wars* hit shelves.

The least expensive and most unexpected release was *The Clone Wars 3-Pack*, a three-disc DVD set that repackaged the discs from the recent *Darth Maul Returns* and 2009’s single-disc releases: the Walmart exclusive version of *A Galaxy Divided* and the standard (only) version of *Clone Commandos*. This was a no-frills package of just those discs, but it was nice to see the five-episode version of *A Galaxy Divided* getting a wider release, even though whomever designed the packaging appeared not to have known

⁷² This was later tied by the Walmart holiday reissue “blitz” in 2017 (all on a single day), but “stealth” reissues of all current live action films in Sept. 2019 would top even that with *twenty* new releases at once (or 28 if one counts the even stealthier Walmart exclusives of those reissues that rolled out over Oct. – Nov. 2019).

⁷³ We saw this back in the chapter *The Lucas Films in HD* in *Volume I*.

there was an extra episode, since the packaging (which featured three slightly diagonal, tall slices from each original release's artwork) still declared that it "includes 12 episodes" and that "The Force is yours with 12 action-packed episodes," when there were actually 13.



The Clone Wars 3-Pack (DVD, 2013)

Another pair of releases on the same day was *The Clone Wars: The Complete Season Five* on DVD and Blu-ray. This was the last season to be aired on Cartoon Network, running from Sept. 29, 2012 – Mar. 2, 2013.⁷⁴ The sets arrived in similar packaging to the previous two seasons (this time with a green Obi-Wan cover) with an insert that folded out into a poster of Ahsoka walking away from the Jedi Temple and Yoda's quote from the TCW film about Anakin needing to learn to let go. Unlike previous seasons, this season's sets used only two Blu-rays or three DVDs, since the season was two episodes shorter than usual. For Blu-ray, the discs were labeled with Saw Gerrera (a wise move, given his later reappearances in *Rogue One*, *Rebels*, *The Bad Batch*, the *Rebel Rising* novel, the *Jedi: Fallen Order* video game, and elsewhere) and Ahsoka. The final DVD label featured Hondo Ohnaka

⁷⁴ The season premiere, "Revival," actually first premiered at on Aug. 24, about a month early, at *Star Wars* Celebration VI.

(another good pick, given that he would go on to be part of *Rebels*, the *Galaxy's Edge* multimedia and theme park product line, and more).

The Clone Wars: The Complete Season Five
(Blu-ray, 2013)



The Clone Wars: The Complete Season Five
(DVD, 2013)

The Blu-ray again featured exclusive *Jedi Temple Archives* content, while both sets included short “video commentaries” (actually just videos about the episodes from the official *Star Wars* website) for each episode. The episode order on home video was also fixed, moving “Revival” back to its correct place at the start of the *Shadow Collective* arc. (It had been moved forward to be the season premiere when aired on Cartoon Network to take advantage of hype about Maul’s return in the final two episodes of the previous season.)

The *Jedi Temple Archives* were divided by episode title this time, rather than by arc. Each disc featured content for the episodes it contained, as

expected, while disc 1 also included a bonus slideshow-esque video entitled *The Dark Path* (featuring art by Dave Filoni) and disc 2 included *A Jedi's Journey*, an animated timeline video of Ahsoka's arc from childhood through the end of this season. All of this archival content added up to a total of 214 images and 84 videos, just in the *Jedi Temple Archives* that were exclusive to Blu-ray. This was the lowest number of total images in any *Jedi Temple Archives* section, which was perhaps to be expected for a shorter season, but the number of videos actually jumped a tiny bit over the previous season, though nowhere near the number found in the first three seasons.

Once more, the DVD release, while lacking the *Jedi Temple Archives*, again had its own set of brief, hidden (i.e. "Easter egg") items. In this case, one was original, while two were the same as clicking the Jedi Order symbol while in each Blu-ray disc's *Jedi Temple Archives* section. Each was accessible on one of the DVDs from the "Episodes" menu. On disc 1, highlighting "Bound for Rescue" and moving to the right would highlight Lux Bonteri's chest plate, which, when selected, would play the aforementioned *The Dark Path* video. Doing the same on disc 2 from "Eminence" would allow clicking on Byph's right eye to play a time lapse video showing the creation of Eric Maruscak's *The Clone Wars* "Who Will Fall?" chalk art piece from *Star Wars* Celebration VI. On disc 3, moving right from "The Wrong Jedi" would turn Yoda's eyes into clickable (and rather creepy) red. Clicking on them would play the *A Jedi's Journey* video.



Insert folded out into a poster

Changes for Better and/or Worse:

The Clone Wars: The Complete Season Five (2013)

Two episodes are unadvertised extended cuts: “Eminence” and “Shades of Reason,” both from the Shadow Collective arc and due to decapitations.

“Eminence”

We now see the bodies of the beheaded Black Sun leaders collapse and Savage call his lightsaber back to him.

“Shades of Reason”

We now see an extra reaction shot of Bo-Katan Kryze and an overhead view of the decapitated Pre Vizsla after he and Maul battle for leadership of Death Watch.

Shadow Collective Arc Celebration Europe II Feature-length cut

I should also note that all four episodes of the Shadow Collective arc (“Revival,” “Eminence,” “Shades of Reason,” and “The Lawless”) were shown as a feature-length cut on July 27 and 28, 2013, at the second *Star Wars* Celebration Europe in Essen, Germany. It has not been made available in that form on home video since, and details are sketchy as to what was actually changed, though one can assume it was likely just the episodes running from one into the next, similar to the way the Nightsisters arc was handled from the third season, rather than the heavily-edited and shuffled approach taken to the final fourth season arc for *Darth Maul Returns*.

The second Blu-ray disc in this set (but none of the DVDs) originally had a slight synchronization error between video and audio, prompting Warner Home Video to offer a replacement disc by mail.

For a More Digital Age (2012 – 2013, 2019)

For iTunes digital release, the fifth season of *The Clone Wars* included two sneak peek featurettes in Sept. 2012, both focused on the “red carpet” premiere event for the season and interviews with the cast and crew.

Along with the rest of the series (except the seventh season), this season was included at launch on Disney+ when it premiered on Nov. 12, 2019. Episodes on the streaming service were identical to the physical season set.

Also in 2013, iTunes sold a second handful of episodes in a thematic pack outside of typical season pass sets of full seasons. Entitled *Lightsaber Duels* (not to be confused with the Nintendo Wii video game of the same name), this second thematic pack included “Cloak of Darkness,” “Lair of Grievous,” and “The Hidden Enemy” from the first season, “Nightsisters”

and “Witches of the Mist” from the third season, and “Revenge” from the fourth. Episodes in the pack were identical to those previously released through iTunes (i.e. 16:9, original aired versions), just sold in a different assortment again.

That same day (Oct. 15, 2013) also brought *The Clone Wars: Seasons 1 – 5 Collector's Edition*, a huge boxed set of all five Cartoon Network seasons of TCW on either Blu-ray or DVD. Oddly, the outer box for both versions was identical, so that once a buyer brought it home, took off the shrink wrap, and removed the cardboard product info sheet adhered to the packaging (the J-card) to get to the actual collector's edition box inside, there was no way at all to tell the two sets apart without opening them. The packages included an exclusive *The Art of the Clone Wars* hardback book and an “episode guide” that was more a guide to what was on each disc than an actual episode guide.⁷⁵

In the Blu-ray set, the first three seasons were contained in a large, blue Blu-ray case with Rex on the front, while the last two seasons from Cartoon Network were in a second, similar case featuring Cody. Since the outer boxes were identical, a block of Styrofoam was included in the Blu-ray set to take up the vertical space that standard Blu-ray cases would not. The DVD set, meanwhile, placed the first two full seasons and the first part of the third into a large, clear DVD case, then used a second, similar case for the rest. Once again, Rex and Cody appeared on the front of the cases.

These sets essentially just reissued the same discs from the five season sets (including the flawed second Blu-ray disc of *The Complete Season Five*, necessitating another replacement from Warner Home Video). Disc labels were updated to have a uniform, blue background. Perhaps most interesting about the discs themselves was the lengths to which Warner Home Video went to avoid repeating characters on disc labels. Since characters like Ahsoka had appeared on multiple discs over the previous season sets, those characters were now limited to one appearance, so new characters were chosen to replace them. This meant characters Mother Talzin, Count Dooku, and Mace Windu finally appeared on disc label art. Labels for the

⁷⁵ Jason Fry actually wrote an official *The Clone Wars Episode Guide* for Dorling Kindersley, which finally gave us a publication, rather than a website posting from Leland Chee, to let us know the order in which episodes of the first five seasons took place. Fry's guide was released in June 2013, four months prior to the release of these sets, making it extremely handy when watching the sets chronologically.

fifth season were also swapped so that Hondo Ohnaka was on the second Blu-ray and DVD (instead of the third DVD and neither Blu-ray), which moved older Ahsoka to the third DVD (a surprising second appearance for her on a DVD label in the giant set) and entirely off of fifth season labels for the Blu-ray *Seasons 1 – 5 Collector's Edition*, leaving just young Ahsoka to represent the character on the high definition discs.

I would be remiss to leave discussion of the discs themselves without mentioning the Blu-ray version's *Jedi Temple Archives*, which carried over, of course, from the season sets on these relabeled discs. The sheer volume of material found therein was staggering: 1,360 images (mostly concept art) and 638 videos (deleted scenes, character model turnarounds, extended scenes, animatics, etc.).



The Clone Wars: Seasons 1 – 5 Collector's Edition (2013) – Blu-ray (left) vs. DVD (right)... or is it the other way around? There's no way to tell!



Blu-ray version content



DVD version content

A Saga on Home Video: A Fan's Guide to U.S. *Star Wars* Home Video Releases



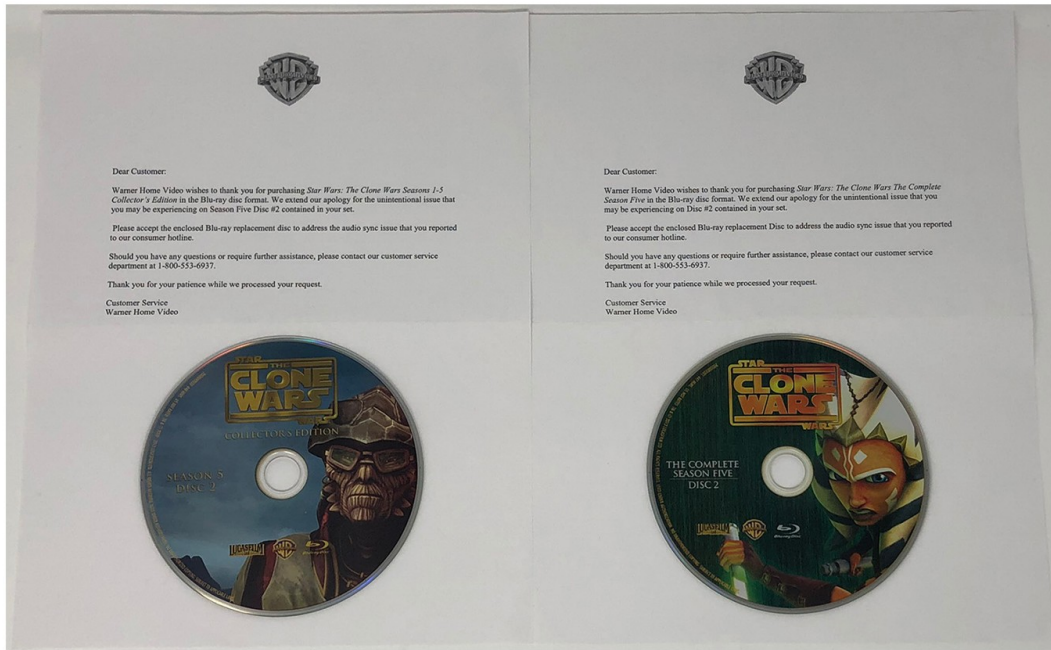
Original disc labels from season sets were swapped out for a uniform background.



Three discs had label art swapped to remove redundant characters.



Swapping Ahsoka and Hondo's discs for the last two DVDs of the fifth season may have seemed nonsensical for the DVD set (left), but it allowed a second appearance of Ahsoka to disappear from the Blu-ray set (right).



Warner Home Video replacement discs (with letters) for Season 5, Disc 2 – *Seasons 1 – 5 Collector's Edition* disc (left) and *The Complete Season Five* disc (right)

This release has been criticized over the years for not being a complete set of *The Clone Wars*. One version of this criticism was that the set did not include *The Clone Wars* film, which was already on Blu-ray at the time. Its lack of inclusion would appear to have been a rights issue stemming from being a theatrical release compared to a television series, even though both were distributed by Warner Home Video. The other version of the criticism was that this set should have waited until after Netflix aired the sixth season of *The Clone Wars*. (At the time, Netflix had not been announced⁷⁶ as the place American audiences could see a sixth, short season, but we had been told on Mar. 11, 2013, during the announcement of the end of *The Clone Wars* on Cartoon Network, that what existed of a sixth season would be completed and released through some unknown means in the future. We knew more episodes were coming soon, just not when or how.⁷⁷)

⁷⁶ The announcement came in Feb. 2014.

⁷⁷ We wouldn't learn about a seventh season coming via Disney+ until an announcement on July 19, 2018, about half a decade later and 16 months before the streaming service launched. Those episodes wouldn't begin airing until Feb. 21, 2020. Still, the existence of a seventh season over half a decade later doesn't necessarily alter the idea that a "complete series" set in 2013 – 2014 would theoretically have required the sixth season that *had* been announced but hadn't

While these arguments carried some weight on the surface level, they did not hold up on deeper inspection. For a television series to include a feature film in any “complete series” set was not a standard at this time. The idea that the set should have waited might also not have affected which seasons were included, since the episodes aired on Cartoon Network were distributed via Warner Home Video, while those that aired on Netflix had no ties to Warner Home Video and were under the purview of Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment, who did release *The Lost Missions* (the sixth season) on home video about a year later. (The seventh season was still over half a decade away.)

Of course, none of that content (the film or sixth season) was within the scope of what was actually released, nor did its name ever suggest anything otherwise. The set was not called *The Clone Wars: The Complete Series*. It was clearly labeled as *The Clone Wars: Seasons 1 – 5 Collector's Edition*, and that is precisely what it was. One can certainly argue the merits of such a set instead of something more comprehensive for its era, but this set seems to have gotten a bad rap less for what it actually *was* and more for what fans would have *preferred* to see released instead.

Meanwhile in the United Kingdom (2013)

On the day before the American release of both *The Clone Wars: The Complete Season Five* and *Seasons 1 – 5 Collector's Edition*, the fifth season reached DVD and Blu-ray in the UK. With such an elaborate set available in America for the five Cartoon Network seasons of the show, fans had wondered just what form such a set might take across the pond, where boxed sets consisting of existing season sets within a new slipcover had been the rule for TCW since 2010.

Unfortunately for fans in the UK, they did not receive an equivalent of the American *Seasons 1 – 5 Collector's Edition* with new disc labels, new inner cases, an art book, and a combined episode guide. Instead, the UK saw the release of *The Clone Wars: The Complete Seasons 1 – 5*, which was similar in approach to the other multi-season boxed sets from the previous three years. This boxed set simply repackaged the five season sets into a new slipcover. Artwork showed Ahsoka in the foreground to the left with Anakin behind her, further to the left. To their right in the background were Pre Vizsla, Gwarm, and Darth Sidious. The background color this time was a dark red or burgundy.

aired yet when the *Seasons 1 – 5 Collector's Edition* was released in Oct. 2013.



The Clone Wars: The Complete Seasons 1 – 5 (UK Blu-ray, 2013)

What made this set somewhat noteworthy was that the Blu-ray version was often imported (both at the time and in the years since) into the U.S. by buyers who could not afford the high retail or even more inflated secondary market prices for the *Seasons 1 – 5 Collector's Edition*. In that sense, it joined the ranks of the Japanese TPM LaserDisc, the Malaysian and Hong Kong TPM VCDs, and foreign Blu-ray 3D releases of TLJ, *Solo*, and TROS as one of the most heavily imported foreign releases to the American market in all of *Star Wars* home video.

Forget the Lost Twenty, Try the Lost Thirteen (2014)

On Mar. 11, 2013, it was announced that *The Clone Wars* would be coming to a close on Cartoon Network to make way for a new series that had yet to be named. Many fans at the time (probably rightly so) saw *The Clone Wars* as a casualty of Walt Disney Company's purchase of Lucasfilm (finalized Dec. 21, 2012). It was promised, however, that the episodes that had already entered production for the planned sixth season would still be completed and released somehow. In Feb. 2014, Netflix was announced as that "somehow," and the thirteen completed episodes were released all at once (typical contemporary practice for Netflix) on Mar. 7, 2014.

Paid digital streaming services and home video are rather strange bedfellows with some quirks to their relationship. Physical home media now faces competition (and perhaps even an existential threat) from streaming services like Netflix or Disney's own Disney+ (launched in 2019). In theory, any digital service should never release its exclusive programming

to physical media, thereby monopolizing that content and maintaining that perceived advantage. On the other hand, platforms that produce their own content (e.g. Netflix with its hit *House of Cards* or Disney+ with *The Mandalorian*) may sometimes find it financially worthwhile to release that content to broader audiences via physical home media once word of mouth has created a new potential audience. (Imagine, for instance, all of the people who heard about early seasons of *House of Cards* without subscribing to Netflix and then flocked to buy the season sets on Blu-ray and DVD once they could watch them without a monthly subscription fee.)

This has led to an unpredictable marketplace, where some series that are produced as exclusives to specific streaming services are never released in physical form, while others are eventually released on physical media, but often only after incurring long enough delays between streaming and physical release to have “milked” the potential to lure new subscribers to its maximum potential. In some cases, we see a frustrating mixture of the two, especially in the case of another Disney-owned property, the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU). From 2015 – 2019, Netflix produced a total of 13 seasons of 6 original MCU series (*Daredevil*, *Jessica Jones*, *Luke Cage*, *Iron Fist*, *The Defenders*, and *The Punisher*). Only two out of three seasons of *Daredevil*, one out of three seasons of *Jessica Jones*, and one season out of two of *Luke Cage* have ever seen physical release in the United States. *Iron Fist* had one of its two seasons released in other regions but not in America, while *The Defenders* and *The Punisher* have never had a physical release in the western world.

Thankfully, *The Clone Wars* did not get the “extreme delay” or “never released” treatment of its Marvel counterparts. Instead, the sixth season arrived as *The Lost Missions* (its title from Netflix) on Nov. 11, 2014, eight months after becoming available for streaming (and binge-watching) on Netflix.

Packaging was somewhat similar to previous seasons: a standard, blue Blu-ray case or clear DVD case, each with a cardboard slipcover, this time featuring Yoda and a clone trooper instead of a single character. The Blu-ray release included two discs, labeled with Obi-Wan and Anakin, while the DVD set was three discs with Mace Windu on the extra disc.⁷⁸ Both

⁷⁸ This was rather amusing, given that Mace was one of the characters who did not appear on disc art for any season sets of TCW until the *Seasons 1 – 5 Collector's Edition*, when he was used to replace a repeated character. Now, by virtue of that tweak for the giant set and *The Lost Missions*, Mace himself became a repeated character on disc art if one owned the boxed set and this season set.

included codes for Disney Movie Rewards points, a first for a TCW release (since this was Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment's first TCW product).



The Clone Wars: The Lost Missions
(Blu-ray, 2014)

The Clone Wars: The Lost Missions (DVD, 2014)



This set did not include a *Jedi Temple Archives* section on the Blu-ray, but the Blu-ray release did still have exclusive content in the form of the four-part *Crystal Crisis on Utapau* story arc made of unfinished story reels previously released on the official *Star Wars* website on Sept. 25, 2014, under the heading of *The Clone Wars: Legacy* content. (Unfortunately, this set was released before the *Bad Batch* arc of unfinished story reels was shown at Celebration Anaheim on Apr. 17, 2015, then released on the official *Star Wars* website twelve days later, making those unfinished story reels a part of

The Clone Wars that has never seen physical or even purchasable, digital home video release, similar to *The Clone Wars: Decoded*. Thankfully, that arc was one of the three that were finally finished, rather than just presented as story reels, when Disney+ launched a revived seventh season of the show in 2020. It then spawned its own series, *The Bad Batch*.) Both formats this time included a featurette entitled *The Clone Wars Declassified* (not to be confused with *Decoded*) that looked back on the series. The Blu-ray also included trailers for *Rebels* and two unrelated Disney films (*Big Hero 6* and *Maleficent*).

Changes for Better and/or Worse:

***The Clone Wars: The Lost Missions* (2014)**

One strange aspect of this release was that it did have one episode that differed from an aired version, but the aired version in question was not on Netflix.

“Voices”

In Germany, the sixth season had aired on Super RTL Feb. 15 – Mar. 7, 2014. When aired in Germany, the episode “Voices” included an extended scene when Yoda leaves Coruscant. Rather than showing Yoda lift off, Anakin’s reaction when other Jedi arrive, then cutting directly to Yoda emerging from hyperspace over Dagobah as in the Netflix and U.S. home video version, the German broadcast showed Yoda lift off and Anakin’s reaction (as in the U.S.), then shifted to follow Yoda’s custom Jedi Interceptor exiting Coruscant’s atmosphere, connecting to its hyperspace ring, and jumping to hyperspace at the push of a button by Yoda. The episode then cut to a commercial break and returned to Yoda emerging from hyperspace, at which point the episode continued as released in America. For some reason, Yoda’s hyperspace ring sequence over Coruscant was cut from the U.S. release.

For a More Digital Age (2014, 2019)

Coverage of the previous *The Clone Wars* releases reveals another unusual issue for this oddball season. When the sixth season was added to Netflix, so were the previous seasons (and film), all of which were in their home video release aspect ratio (2.35:1), rather than their 16:9 (1.77:1) Cartoon Network presentation.

The sixth season was also presented in 2.35:1 “theatrical” widescreen, making it the first to premiere in the aspect ratio used during production. However, when it reached iTunes (and indeed it did, despite doubts on that possibility at the time) simultaneously with its home video release, it was

presented in 16:9, even though it had never been seen that way previously, nor was it presented in that aspect ratio on physical home media. One has to wonder if this decision was made to keep the final season consistent with the others already on iTunes, or if this was an attempt to make sure that Netflix and home video retained a superior product to iTunes.

Along with the rest of the series (except the seventh season), this season was included at launch on Disney+ when it premiered on Nov. 12, 2019. Episodes on the streaming service were identical to the initial Netflix release and the physical season set.

Meanwhile in Turkey (2014)

What seems like many chapters ago, we left behind a format that was popular in other regions but not in the United States: VCD. While much of the world had moved on to HD formats (or at least DVD) by 2014, the VCD format lived on in some regions as a relatively inexpensive (if inferior) home media format. One such location was Turkey, where we have previously noted Turkish-dubbed VCDs of *Episodes I – III*.⁷⁹

In 2014, six years after its theatrical debut and with the series in what most fans expected to be its last, partial season on Netflix, Turkey saw a VCD release of *The Clone Wars* film. Once again, this was a Turkish-dubbed version of the film. Unlike previous releases we've seen, though, which were published through Tiglon (partnered with 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment), *The Clone Wars* was released through Yeni Film (partnered with Warner Home Video). The film split between two discs shortly after Asajj Ventress arrived at the monastery on Teth. Disc labels were identical except the disc numbers and bore artwork similar to the standard, American Blu-ray release.

⁷⁹ See the chapter *Rise of DVD, Demise of VHS* in *Volume I*.



The Clone Wars (Turkish VCD, 2014)

Perhaps even more odd than this release's timing and format was its aspect ratio. Since this was a VCD release, the film was presented in 4:3 full screen.

Why did they hang on to VCD for so long? Why was this release full screen instead of at least letterboxed widescreen? Why release the film on VCD six years after it was in theaters?

I suppose it's like the song says, "That's nobody's business but the Turks."⁸⁰

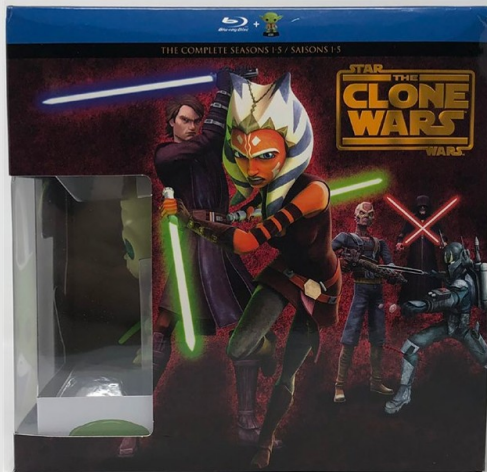
Meanwhile in France (2015)

On Sept. 30, 2015, nearly two full years after the release of the somewhat fancy *The Clone Wars: Seasons 1 – 5 Collector's Edition* boxed set in the United States, France saw the release of Blu-ray and DVD boxed sets of the first five seasons of *The Clone Wars* that added a bonus item that made them a bit more attractive to collectors.

In each set, dubbed *The Clone Wars: The Complete Seasons 1 – 5* as in the UK, the discs were standard French releases (i.e. region-free Blu-ray and Region 2 DVD) with their original labels. Despite the outer packaging

⁸⁰ Or perhaps, "People just liked it better that waaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaay!"

closely resembling an elongated version of the UK packaging and even including images of the previous season sets' packaging, the discs themselves were not held in standard cases from their original releases as they had been in the UK. Instead, the discs were kept within large, blue Blu-ray or clear DVD cases that were much like the cases inside the American *The Clone Wars: Seasons 1 – 5 Collector's Edition*. For Blu-ray, the first three seasons were held in a case with Rex on the cover, while the latter two were within a case featuring Cody. (This was essentially the same as the American approach, albeit with the text – but not the logo – in French.) The approach differed from the U.S. version for DVD, however. Seasons 1 – 2 (but none from the third) were held within a case with Rex on the cover. Seasons 3 – 4 were then in a second case with a generic, Phase II clone trooper on the cover. A *third* case was then used for the fifth season, with clone commando Gregor featured on the cover.



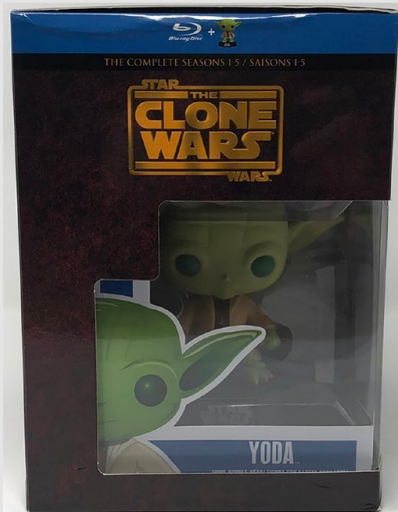
The Clone Wars: The Complete Seasons 1 – 5 (French Blu-ray, 2015)



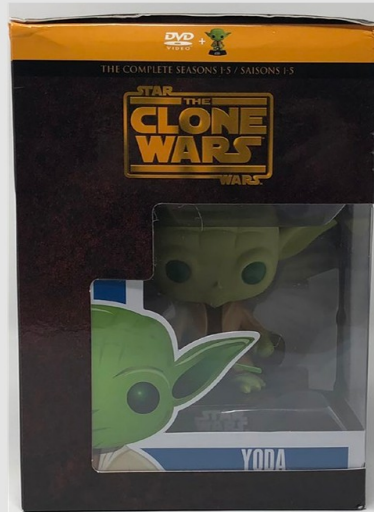
The Clone Wars: The Complete Seasons 1 – 5 (French DVD, 2015)

To color code the releases, the Blu-ray packaging included a standard, blue area at the top that noted its format. The DVD version included a similar band in orange. That colored band noted the format by a standard Blu-ray or DVD symbol, followed by a plus sign and an image of Yoda.

Why Yoda? Why the elongated packaging? That's what made these interesting. Each of the two boxed sets included a Funko Pop! Yoda figure in its original box. (For collectors, this was the first issue version of Yoda, #02, in its 2011 packaging.) Thus, the home video boxed sets needed to be extra wide in order to include the entire figure box within the larger home video package.



Funko Pop! Yoda package as seen through outer Blu-ray box



Funko Pop! Yoda package as seen through outer DVD box



Blu-ray set contents



DVD set contents – Notice the different approach to DVD cases and their art.

Even if it was two years “late” in hitting the market, the Yoda figure made this release sought after by collectors of home video and Funko Pop! figures alike.

Back from the Dead (2020)

After a theatrical film, five seasons on Cartoon Network, and a brief resuscitation on Netflix for thirteen episodes, fans believed that *The Clone Wars* had finally met its end. All six seasons (and the film) were considered part of the Lucasfilm Story Group’s new canonical continuity (2014 – present), while also being part of the Legends continuity (1976 – 2014, et al⁸¹). Dark Horse Comics soon released the comic book mini-series *Son of*

⁸¹ The online video game *The Old Republic* continued Legends stories, and Marvel Comics released “Forever Crimson” (a single-issue continuation of Marvel’s original *Star Wars* series from 1977 – 1986) in 2019, hence the “et al,” since the bulk of publishing for that earlier continuity ended in 2014.

Dathomir (May – Aug. 2014), based on finished scripts for episodes⁸² that would have been part of a then-unproduced seventh season. The story, adapted by Jeremy Barlow⁸³, followed Maul after his defeat in the episode “The Lawless,” revealed Mother Talzin to be his (and Savage’s) biological mother, and saw Talzin subsequently sacrifice herself for Maul.⁸⁴ Another set of unproduced scripts (two arcs of four each⁸⁵) were adapted into the novel *Dark Disciple* by Christie Golden in 2015. The book brought back Quinlan Vos to *The Clone Wars* era with a characterization closer to that of his pre-2008 Legends continuity comic incarnation than his less brooding demeanor in the TCW episode “Hunt for Ziro.” The tale brought Quinlan together with Asajj Ventress (in a few senses of the word) and provided readers with a true finale to her TCW character arc. Due to publishing dates, *Son of Dathomir* was considered by Lucasfilm to be part of both the Legends continuity and the Story Group’s current canon, while *Dark Disciple* was only considered part of the current continuity.

⁸² The episodes would have been entitled “The Enemy of My Enemy,” “A Tale of Two Apprentices,” “Proxy War,” and “Showdown on Dathomir.”

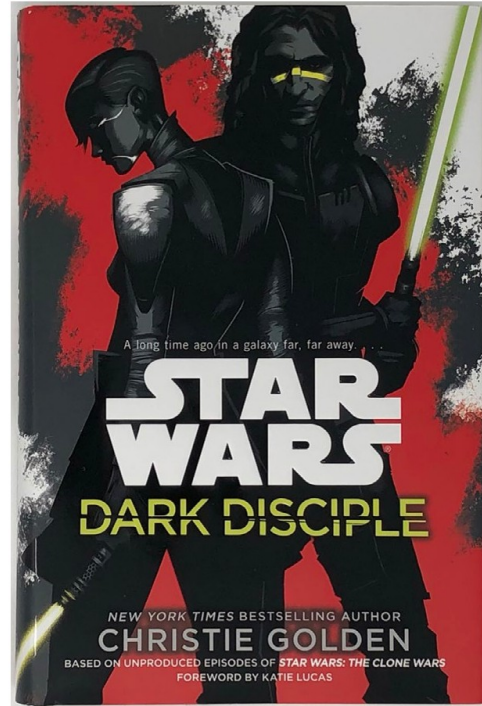
⁸³ Yes, the same Jeremy Barlow who “Tuckerized” me and my first podcast (*ChronoRadio*) as Krono Relt, a character in *Empire: What Sin Loyalty?*, in 2003 and later gave me the opportunity to write “Equals and Opposites” for *Star Wars Tales* in 2004.

⁸⁴ Without *Son of Dathomir*, there is no explanation offered for how Maul managed to escape Darth Sidious’ custody at the end of season five’s “The Lawless” to somehow reappear free (and still running the Shadow Collective) in season seven’s “Together Again.” It was a critical part of Maul’s TCW storyline, just as *Dark Disciple* was for Asajj Ventress.

⁸⁵ The first arc would have consisted of the episodes “Lethal Alliance” (not to be confused with the video game of the same name), “The Mission,” “Conspirators,” and “Dark Disciple.” The second arc would have aired a bit later and would have consisted of “Saving Vos, Part 1,” “Saving Vos, Part 2,” “Traitor,” and “The Path.”



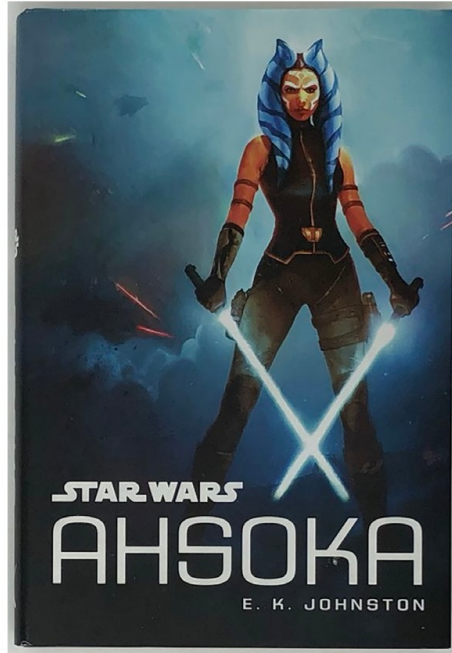
Darth Maul: Son of Dathomir (2014) –
Issues 1 – 4 (original covers)



Dark Disciple (2015) – original
hardback edition

Fans believed this to be the end of *The Clone Wars* content production. Sure, we would see Ahsoka, Rex, and Maul back in *Rebels* after a little while, and we would learn a bit about Ahsoka's participation in the Siege of Mandalore during *Revenge of the Sith* through flashbacks in E.K. Johnston's *Ahsoka* novel (2016)⁸⁶, but we all but gave up on ever seeing any further episodes of TCW, let alone the planned series finale that dovetailed into *Episode III*.

⁸⁶ The novel would end up heavily contradicted by the actual episodes, which was written off as the flashbacks in the novel being akin to novelizations of films that invariably differ from the material they adapt.



Ahsoka (2016) – original hardback edition –
source of the Siege of Mandalore flashbacks that were then contradicted on screen

Then the impossible happened. On July 19, 2018, during a panel at San Diego Comic-Con International designed to celebrate the series' 10th anniversary, Dave Filoni dropped a bombshell: *The Clone Wars* would return for a total of twelve more episodes as a seventh season to air exclusively via Walt Disney Company's upcoming streaming service, Disney+.

Disney+ launched on Nov. 12, 2019, bringing with it the TCW film and all six existing seasons in HD as they had appeared on Blu-ray. Three months later, the new seventh (and final) season premiered with the episode "The Bad Batch" on Feb. 21, 2020. Unlike how Netflix had released all of the sixth season at once on Mar. 7, 2014, Disney+ released one seventh season episode per week from Feb. 1 – May 1, 2020, then released the final episode of the series ("Victory and Death") three days after the penultimate episode ("Shattered") to celebrate "*Star Wars* Day" on May 4 (i.e. "May the Fourth be with you!").

The season only consisted of three story arcs of four episodes each, informally known as the *Bad Batch*, *Ahsoka's Walkabout*, and *Siege of Mandalore* arcs. As with most of the first 2.5 seasons of the series, the chronological order of this season was not the aired order. (The correct chronological order for this seasons was episodes 5 – 8, 1 – 4, and then 9 – 12.) While the *Bad Batch* arc provided what was essentially finished versions of episodes we'd seen as unfinished Story Reels five years earlier, the *Ahsoka's Walkabout* arc provided new insights into Ahsoka's time between leaving the Jedi Order and the Siege of Mandalore. The final arc tied up multiple story threads, leading us directly into the events of *Revenge of the Sith*

with some heartbreaking and exhilarating moments. Moreover, this was the first season of TCW to be available in 4K rather than just HD.

Unfortunately (but unsurprisingly), there has yet to be a physical home media release of this season, nor any digital release outside of Disney+ on the American market. It remains a major draw for Disney+ subscriptions.

For a More Digital Age (2020)

As noted above, this season aired individual episodes weekly on Disney+ from Feb. 21 – May 1, 2020, followed by the series finale on May 4, 2020. No bonus features were available, nor was the season available for purchase on any other platforms. It remains, as of the time of this guide's publication, a Disney+ exclusive. It provided a single extra to the entirety of TCW on Disney+ in the form of one of this season's early trailers.

Meanwhile in the United Kingdom (2021)

Seven years is a long time. It took less than seven years for all three *Original Trilogy* films to be released in theaters. The same was the case for the *Prequel Trilogy*. In less than seven years, Disney released five new *Star Wars* films. The entirety of the Cartoon Network run of *The Clone Wars* lasted less than seven years.

Imagine then how long those seven years felt in the United Kingdom, where instead of receiving their version of *The Clone Wars: The Lost Missions* on Blu-ray and DVD in 2014 with other regions like America, fans had to wait until Apr. 5, 2021, to finally see their own release of the series' sixth season.



The Clone Wars: The Lost Missions
(UK Blu-ray, 2021)



The Clone Wars: The Lost Missions
(UK DVD, 2021)

By the time the UK saw their own Blu-ray and DVD releases of *The Lost*

Missions, the final season of the show had already aired on Disney+ and the premiere of *The Bad Batch* spinoff series was less than a month away.

What arrived was essentially identical to the U.S. version, albeit with the DVDs being Region 2. The biggest difference, which was rather unfortunate but understandable given the lag between production of this release and those of other regions, was the lack of slipcovers for either UK product.

With the series already available on Disney+, one has to wonder what finally prompted Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment to bother producing UK versions of this season. It was nice to at least bring the UK up to par with other regions, but the timing was about as bizarre as they come in *Star Wars* home video collecting.

Conclusion: A Strong Prototype

Say what you will about *The Clone Wars* (and I've said plenty myself on podcasts over the years⁸⁷), it marked an important point in *Star Wars* home video. Sure, the *Clone Wars* micro-series had been released entirely on home video, but that was a collection of episodes that all ran less than 20 (or often less than 5) min. each, which, even merged together, presented only enough content for two DVDs. The only previous *Star Wars* television series to air weekly, half-hour episodes or span one full season or more were *Droids* and *Ewoks*, neither of which had ever (or has ever) received season or series sets on physical media in America.

The Clone Wars was therefore a bit of a proving ground for how *Star Wars* television series would be handled on home video. For the most part, the results were promising. Content cut for time or to make episodes "safer" for kids watching on television was added back into final releases. The television aspect ratio of 16:9 was tossed out for season sets to provide the 2.35:1 aspect ratio in which episodes had been produced. Extras varied in depth and number but were relatively strong throughout. The home video presentation made it the best way to experience each season of *The Clone Wars*.⁸⁸ For a society "cutting the cord" (i.e. dropping cable TV in lieu

⁸⁷ Insert shameless plug: One major aspect of my Patreon (patreon.com/nathanpbutler) has been a series of audio commentaries that I've produced that can be played alongside watching, among other things, *The Clone Wars*.

⁸⁸ Even when presented in HD on streaming services, bandwidth considerations could render those versions lower in quality to the Blu-rays. Unfortunately, this was

of online streaming services) in greater and greater numbers, the home video experience for *Star Wars* fans appeared to be on the right track to remain a viable alternative to internet-driven viewing (the seventh season's streaming exclusivity years later notwithstanding).

also true with Disney+, which included the first six seasons of TCW at launch (only in HD, not the 4K resolution of the seventh season that premiered on the service three months later).

13 JOINING THE REBELLION

(2014 – 2018)

At the same time that *The Clone Wars* was announced as ending on Mar. 11, 2013, a new cartoon was announced as being in development. On May 20, 2013, we learned the name and general concept of that new series, entitled *Star Wars: Rebels*. New details trickled out through official channels, such as the Oct. 12, 2013, announcement at New York Comic Con that the villain of *Rebels* (at least at first) would be an Inquisitor, a concept carried over from the continuity that would soon be redesignated “Legends.” The first episodes were screened for San Diego Comic-Con International audiences on July 24, 2014, and characters began to appear in licensed, canonical stories in the Lucasfilm Story Group’s new canon, such as in the pages of Ryder Windham’s *Ezra’s Gamble* and John Jackson Miller’s *A New Dawn*. Animated shorts began to be released online on Aug. 11, 2014, eventually numbering four. Finally, after nineteen months of expectations, *Rebels* premiered with the double-length “Spark of Rebellion” on Disney Channel on Oct. 3, 2014, then moved to Walt Disney Company’s own “cartoon network,” Disney XD, for its first regular-length episode, “Droids in Distress,” on Oct. 13, 2014.

Unlike the two month wait for *The Clone Wars*’ theatrical film “pilot” to arrive on home video, Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment wasted no time in making the *Rebels* pilot, “Spark of Rebellion,” available on home video, kicking off a new product line.

Jumping the Blaster (2014)

The first physical home video release for *Rebels* on the American market arrived on Oct. 14, 2014, just eleven days after the series premiered on television. Eager to capitalize on the hype for the series, Walt Disney

Studios Home Entertainment produced a single-disc DVD release of “Spark of Rebellion,” the double-length pilot episode. No Blu-ray equivalent was released.

While giving the impression of a quick cash-in, this release was actually fairly strong for what it was. Contained in a standard, black DVD case with a slipcover, both of which bore identical artwork of the *Ghost* crew from an early promotional poster, the disc (with Ezra from the packaging on its label) included a brief look at what to expect in the first season of *Rebels*, one *Star Wars* trailer (*The Clone Wars: The Lost Missions*), two unrelated Disney trailers (*Big Hero 6* and *Maleficent*), and, most importantly, all four of the short episodes released to lead into the series (“The Machine in the *Ghost*,” “Art Attack,” “Entanglement,” and “Property of Ezra Bridger”⁸⁹). Those shorts would *not* be part of the DVD version of the first season set released for the series, though they would appear on the first season’s Blu-ray release, making this the only way to get those shorts on DVD.



Rebels: Spark of Rebellion (DVD, 2014)

The episode was presented in 16:9 widescreen (blessedly *not* letterboxed) as it aired on Disney XD, which put some fans off a bit until it was revealed that this was the format in which the series was produced. There was simply no such thing as a 2.35:1 “theatrical widescreen” version of *Rebels*, much to

⁸⁹ This short was at one time entitled “Not What You Think.”

our disappointment.

For the U.S. release, most copies included a small paper model of the iconic *Rebels* starship, the *Ghost*. The package also included a code for Disney Movie Rewards points on a slip that mirrored the cover art with the provocative tagline, “Get what’s yours.”



Assembled *Ghost* model (with instructions and packaging)

This release was probably a bit premature. Less than two weeks later, “Spark of Rebellion” aired on ABC during prime time on Oct. 26, 2014. This time, the episode featured a new opening scene of the Grand Inquisitor communicating with Darth Vader, voiced by James Earl Jones himself. Thus, this home video version of “Spark of Rebellion” was out of date after only twelve days. (To be fair, though, the version found in the first season set *would* include the Vader scene, making this the only way to own the original version *without* that scene on physical home media.)

From Lothal to Ahsoka (2015)

The first season of *Rebels* aired Oct. 3, 2014 – Mar. 2, 2015. Six months later, on Sept. 1, 2015, *Rebels: Complete Season One* (no “the,” unlike all of TCW’s season sets) was released on Blu-ray and DVD. Packaging was reminiscent of the latter seasons of *The Clone Wars*: a standard, blue Blu-ray case or clear DVD case presented with a cardboard slipcover. Slipcovers and cases used identical artwork from another series poster. Both releases included codes for Disney Movie Rewards points on a slip that featured

members of the *Ghost* crew and a stormtrooper. It held the less provocative tagline, “Get rewarded today!”

The Blu-ray version included the entire season and the four shorts on two discs, labeled with Ezra Bridger and Sabine Wren. The DVD version included the entire season (but *not* the shorts) on three discs, labeled with Ezra, a stormtrooper, and Sabine. (This was less discs than most seasons of the series or for *The Clone Wars* that preceded it, due to the season only including *Spark of Rebellion* and 13 regular-length episodes, rather than a more typical 20 or 22 episodes.)



*Rebels: Complete
Season One
(Blu-ray, 2015)*

*Rebels: Complete
Season One
(DVD, 2015)*



The Blu-ray version included an exclusive look at *Star Wars* Celebration Anaheim (2015) *Rebels* events, while both formats included a look ahead at the second season, an episode-length recap of the first season, and the

Rebels Recon video for each episode of the series.

This was a relatively solid set, providing all of the episodes with excellent picture and sound quality on Blu-ray. Having the shorts on Blu-ray was also a nice inclusion. The set was not without its drawbacks, however. The *Rebels Recon* episodes could already be viewed online for free, and the other extras were not particularly engaging. (The recap could even spoil the entire season if viewed before watching the actual episodes.) Package advertising was also somewhat interesting, given that a sticker on the DVD version's slipcover readily acknowledged that there was more to the bonus features (i.e. the addition of the shorts) if a buyer instead purchased the season on Blu-ray. (The Blu-ray version's sticker touted its exclusive bonuses also, but that was to be expected.)



The sticker on the Blu-ray (left) promoted its extra bonus features. The sticker on the DVD release (right) pointed fans toward the Blu-ray version instead.

Most frustrating was the handling of “Spark of Rebellion,” which *did* include the Vader scene but was split into two episodes as it was on later airings rather than being included in its double-length form as seemingly intended by the creators. Thankfully, it could still be seen that way on the individual DVD release from Oct. 2014 (without the Vader scene) or through digital outlets like iTunes (with the Vader scene, see sidebar).

Changes for Better and/or Worse:

***Rebels: Complete Season One* (2015)**

As originally aired, the midpoint of “Spark of Rebellion” shows the *Ghost* and an Imperial transport being pulled toward a Star Destroyer’s docking bay, followed by a worried look from Ezra.

“Spark of Rebellion” (now “Spark of Rebellion, Part 1”)

The first episode now cuts off with Ezra’s worried look.

“Spark of Rebellion” (now “Spark of Rebellion, Part 2”)

The second part now starts with a new establishing shot and a repeat of the *Ghost* and Imperial transport nearing the docking bay.

An extra title card now appears between Ezra’s look of shock when Garazeb “Zeb” Orrelios chooses to leave him behind and when we next see Hera Syndulla on the *Ghost*.

No content was lost. In fact, a new establishing shot was gained. It remained annoying, though, given that fans knew that this was not how the story was meant to be viewed.

For a More Digital Age (2014 – 2015, 2019)

Rebels episodes, like those of *The Clone Wars* and *LEGO Star Wars*, were released via digital providers like iTunes very soon after airing, usually within a single day. However, the approach taken to *Rebels* was somewhat odd. A season pass for the first season of *Rebels* did not include “Spark of Rebellion,” nor did it include any extra video features.

“Spark of Rebellion” was instead released on its own with six featurettes, one about each member of the *Ghost* crew.

Neither the season pass nor the “Spark of Rebellion” release included the four introductory shorts, which were free to view online elsewhere.

It is also interesting to note that while buying a physical copy of “Spark of Rebellion” did provide a few small bonus features and the *Ghost* model, a digital purchase through iTunes, which did not include those extras, had an important benefit beyond just being released about a week earlier. The iTunes file was updated after the ABC version aired so that it now included the new Vader opening.

The entire *Rebels* series, including this season and its shorts (without any extras), became part of Disney+ at launch on Nov. 12, 2019. In the case of this season, “Spark of Rebellion” was, unfortunately, split into two episodes as in the season’s home video release.

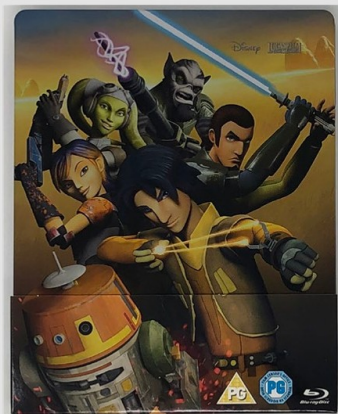
Meanwhile in the United Kingdom (2016)

Fans who enjoyed SteelBook releases were happy to find that UK retailer Zavvi released a SteelBook variant of this set, which, since it was a region-free Blu-ray release, could be played on American Blu-ray players. It was therefore a viable alternative to the regular U.S. season set for those willing to import it. The SteelBook came a bit later than the regular releases, though, not arriving until Feb. 15, 2016, after many had already purchased the set in its standard form. (Of course, no Disney Movie Rewards code was included, since the service wasn’t available in the UK.)

The cover art featured the crew of the *Ghost* on the front and Imperials (the Grand Inquisitor and two stormtroopers) on the back. Both were images from existing poster art. Interior art featured the *Ghost* chased by TIE fighters. Disc label art was the dull blue and silver disc style that was becoming common for Disney releases in some regions.



Rebels: Complete Season One (UK Blu-ray, 2015) – Zavvi exclusive



Cover with J-card



Interior

More *Rebels*, More Frustrations (2016)

The second season of *Rebels* was a bit strange in its timing. The season technically began with the double-length “The Siege of Lothal” episode that first premiered on Apr. 18, 2015, at *Star Wars* Celebration Anaheim and

then aired on June 20, 2015, on Disney XD. No new episodes followed until “The Lost Commanders” on Oct. 14, 2015, four months later. The season then ran until the two-part (rather than double-length) “Twilight of the Apprentice” story on Mar. 30, 2016.

As had been the case since *The Clone Wars*, fans could pick up the episodes through digital means like iTunes shortly after airing, but a physical release did not arrive until Aug. 30, 2016. Packaging for *Rebels: Complete Season Two* remained consistent with the previous season set. The cover art was again from an existing poster, though the original version included the tagline, “Their greatest strength will be each other,” which did not carry over to the home video items. The Blu-ray version included three discs, labeled with Ezra, Sabine, and Vader. The DVD set included four discs, with the extra label featuring Ahsoka. Both included codes for Disney Movie Rewards points on slips that closely resembled the cover art.



*Rebels: Complete
Season Two
(Blu-ray, 2016)*

*Rebels: Complete
Season Two
(DVD, 2016)*



This set again included all of the *Rebels Recon* episodes that had been released online throughout the season. Both sets shared a common featurette about small references that connected *Rebels* to the broader *Star Wars* saga (though most were obvious or already called out specifically on the official *Star Wars* website's episode guides). The Blu-ray included one exclusive featurette, *From Apprentice to Adversary: Vader vs. Ahsoka*.

That Blu-ray exclusive was the first of two missteps for this release, at least in my own opinion. Surely those designing the content for this release must have known that the single most anticipated extra would be something about the clash between Vader and Ahsoka in "Twilight of the Apprentice," yet the DVD release did not include the featurette anywhere on its four discs, so that it could remain a Blu-ray exclusive. As the only truly substantial extra that hadn't already been released online, this was quite a slap in the face to DVD buyers.⁹⁰



The sticker on the Blu-ray (left) promoted its extra bonus feature. Once again, the sticker on the DVD release (right) pointed fans toward the Blu-ray version instead.

The other misstep was a repeat of the same issue fans had with *Rebels: Complete Season One*. The double-length premiere episode for the season, "The Siege of Lothal," was presented as two separate episodes as in subsequent airings instead of as one whole as originally presented on Disney XD. Thankfully, "The Siege of Lothal" seems to have been designed as two episodes that were then combined, rather than as a single

⁹⁰ Of course, this was probably the point. It was most likely a blatant attempt to convince consumers to upgrade to Blu-ray for this and future releases. The sticker on the DVD version's slipcover seems to support this theory. (See comparison image.)

episode that was later split in half. The change from one episode into two episodes was far less jarring than with “Spark of Rebellion.”

Changes for Better and/or Worse:

***Rebels: Complete Season Two* (2016)**

As originally aired, the midpoint of “The Siege of Lothal” shows Vader entering and stalking toward Kanan and Ezra as a variant of the “Imperial March” plays. Vader is seen from the front, then from just behind him as the shot shifts to focus on the Jedi. The music swells throughout both shots, and the story continues from there.

“The Siege of Lothal” (now “The Siege of Lothal, Part 1”)

In the split version, the shot of Vader moving toward the camera with the “Imperial March” playing cuts directly to a “To be continued...” message and the *Rebels* logo, ending the first episode.

“The Siege of Lothal” (now “The Siege of Lothal, Part 2”)

The second episode then begins with a new establishing shot from above the base, then jumps to the view from behind Vader approaching the Jedi with different music. A new title card has been added as Vader uses the Force to hold Ezra’s lightsaber to his own throat, just before Kanan comes to from being briefly knocked out. A variant of the “Imperial March” that plays over Vader’s attack continues over the new title card.

Again, we had a release with great picture and sound on Blu-ray but a flawed treatment of the season premiere, along with extras that were mostly already found elsewhere.

For a More Digital Age (2015 – 2016, 2019)

If the iTunes approach for the first season of *Rebels* was a bit odd, the handling of the second season was an outright mess.

Once again, the double-length episode that kicked off the season (albeit months early), “The Siege of Lothal,” was released as a separate purchase. This time, no bonus content was included, but at least it was released as a single episode.

There were then *two* season passes sold for the rest of the season. The first included the first ten episodes of the season, from “The Lost Commanders” through “A Princess on Lothal” (one episode *past* the mid-season break). A second season pass included the remaining ten episodes, from “The Protector of Concord Dawn” through both parts of “Twilight of the Apprentice.”

The idea of having to purchase *two* season passes for one season or the need to make *three* different purchases (without any bonus features) to obtain the entire season was seen as rather ridiculous, and fans railed against iTunes... but we still bought them.

Thankfully, fan complaints seemed to have reached the right ears by the time the third season was set to premiere.

The entire *Rebels* series (without any extras) became part of Disney+ at launch on Nov. 12, 2019. In the case of this season, “The Siege of Lothal” (like “Spark of Rebellion” from the first season) was split into two episodes as in the season’s home video release.

Meanwhile in the United Kingdom (2018)⁹¹

Like with the first season of *Rebels*, Zavvi released an exclusive SteelBook version of this season in the United Kingdom. However, the handling of this series in SteelBook form was a bit of a mess.

The first season had been released in non-SteelBook, standard packaging on Sept. 14, 2015, but the SteelBook version from Zavvi was not released until Feb. 15, 2016, five months later. That seemed like an extreme gap between releases of what was simply the same product in different packaging.

The gap for the second season was even more extreme. The second season arrived in a standard Blu-ray release on Oct. 3, 2016. Zavvi’s exclusive SteelBook version of the set did not arrive until Sept. 10, 2018, one month shy of a full *two years* later. Was it a nice SteelBook? Sure. Was it worth the wait? Your mileage may vary.

All that aside, once it did arrive, how did the actual product stack up?

It was actually pretty nice. The cover featured an orange design with all six members of the *Ghost* crew, plus Ahsoka Tano. The back featured Darth Vader in his slightly stylized *Rebels* incarnation. Highly observant fans might have noticed that the image of Vader was the background of the original *Rebels: Complete Season Two* cover art (and the poster it came from), while the image of the heroes, without the orange background, was the same image that the standard packaging (and poster) placed beneath Vader (though this version showed more of Ezra). The two elements had been separated and

⁹¹ Yes, I know that placing this here puts it somewhat out of chronological order, but this is another of the rare instances when it makes more sense to include it out of chronological order to better fit a logical order of coverage.

turned into front and back covers for the SteelBook.

The interior artwork, on the other hand, could be seen as a spoiler for anyone who had not yet seen the season, as it featured Ahsoka and Vader engaged in lightsaber combat.



Rebels: Complete Season Two (UK Blu-ray, 2018) – Zavvi exclusive



Cover with J-card

Interior

Unfortunately, this was (or at least appears to be at the time of publication) the last of the seasons of *Rebels* to be released in a Zavvi SteelBook. Standard releases for the third and fourth seasons arrived on Oct. 2, 2017, and Oct. 29, 2018, respectively. Neither has a SteelBook version. (In other words, if they ever do get the SteelBook treatment, the

gap between initial and SteelBook releases would be even more extreme than for the second season. That would seem to make such SteelBooks unlikely.)

Enter (or Reenter?) Thrawn (2017)

July 16, 2016, was an exciting day for fans of the Legends Continuity, especially those attending *Star Wars* Celebration Europe in London, England. The alternate timeline now known as Legends had eventually included materials from 1976 all the way through just before the launch of the Lucasfilm Story Group's new canon in 2014⁹², but the concept of an interconnected *Star Wars* continuity actually began in May 1991 with Timothy Zahn's novel *Heir to the Empire*. The book introduced one of the most well-regarded villains in any incarnation of the saga: the blue-skinned, red-eyed, Chiss strategist and Imperial officer Mitth'raw'nuruodo, better known as Thrawn. While the original version of the character was limited to that earlier continuity, the double-length premiere of *Rebels'* third season, "Steps Into Shadow," which audiences at the London convention were able to experience that day, introduced a new, canonical version of the character, voiced by well-known Danish actor Lars Mikkelsen (brother of Mads Mikkelsen, *Rogue One's* Galen Erso).

This set the stage for the Disney XD television premiere of "Steps Into Shadow" two months later on Sept. 24. The third season then continued to air regular episodes until its two-part season finale, "Zero Hour," on Mar. 25, 2017.

Rebels: Complete Season Three finally arrived on both Blu-ray and DVD on Aug. 29, 2017. Like the previous seasons (but even more so), the DVD version was clearly substandard when compared to its Blu-ray counterpart. The sticker on the slipcover to the DVD version once again advertised the Blu-ray version as having extra features, rather than promoting its own content. Case and slipcover artwork, identical as usual, featured Sabine, Ezra, and Maul above a lower area split by Ezra's lightsaber that featured Hera, Kanan, and Zeb on the left and Thrawn, Governor Arihnda Pryce, and a death trooper on the right.

Both releases included all of the season's episodes, though "Steps Into Shadow" was split into two parts as on subsequent airings, rather than

⁹² Yes, *The Old Republic*, *Forever Crimson*, and the strange mixed materials of the Fantasy Flight Games *Star Wars* tabletop games continued on after 2014, but the bulk of Legends publishing was over.

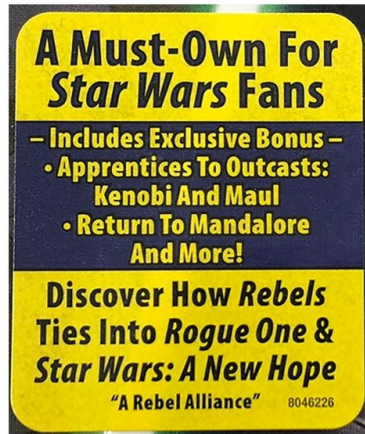
keeping it a single episode as originally aired (or available digitally). Both versions then also included all of the *Rebels Recon* episodes for the season, a trailer for *The Last Jedi*, and one featurette, entitled *A Rebel Alliance*, which looked at this era in terms of both *Rebels* and *Rogue One*. Both also included a Disney Movie Rewards code on a slip with art resembling the season's cover. For the DVD release, which came in a clear case with an embossed slipcover, this was the end of its content. DVD labels included Ezra, Sabine, Thrawn, and Maul.



*Rebels: Complete
Season Three
(Blu-ray, 2017)*

*Rebels: Complete
Season Three
(DVD, 2017)*





Once again, the Blu-ray version's sticker (left) promoted itself, while the DVD release's sticker (right) promoted the Blu-ray release instead of itself.

The Blu-ray version, meanwhile, came on three discs, labeled with Ezra, Sabine, and Thrawn,⁹³ housed within a standard Blu-ray case with an embossed slipcover. Beyond the content that it shared (albeit in HD instead of SD) with its DVD counterpart, the Blu-ray set also included four additional featurettes (*Return to Mandalore*, *Thrawn: A Legend Reborn*, *Apprentices to Outcasts: Kenobi and Maul*, and *The Original Rebel: Saw Gerrera Returns – Extended*) and five audio commentaries. The audio commentaries varied in terms of participants. Commentaries for “Trial of the Darksaber” and “Twin Suns” included only Dave Filoni, while the commentaries for “Legacy of Mandalore” and “Through Imperial Eyes” included Filoni, Joel Aron, Keith Kellogg, Kilian Plunkett, and Justin Ridge. The final commentary (“Double Agent Droid”) added Henry Gilroy to the larger group of commentators.

This was an excellent set for fans picking up the season on Blu-ray, but the gulf between DVD and Blu-ray content for *Rebels* season sets had widened significantly.

Changes for Better and/or Worse:

Rebels: Complete Season Three (2017)

As originally aired, the midpoint of “Steps Into Shadow” has Ezra order the *Phantom* team to actively go after ships instead of sticking to reconnaissance. Sabine somewhat sarcastically states, “Yes, sir.” No music

⁹³ Maul didn't get a Blu-ray label, just DVD. I can hear him screaming into the desert now: “Disneeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeey!”

is playing yet. Then the shot switches to the *Phantom* zooming away from the camera, while urgent music plays. The shot then switches back into the cockpit, where Ezra urges, “Hurry! We’re losing ships!”

“Steps Into Shadow” (now “Steps Into Shadow, Part 1”)

In the split version, music begins playing right after Ezra says, “That’s an order!” That music continues to play as Sabine speaks her line, then continues as a new exterior shot shows the *Phantom* fly across the screen into the clouds from left to right.

“Steps Into Shadow” (now “Steps Into Shadow, Part 2”)

The second episode picks up with the shot of the *Phantom* zooming away from the camera that originally followed Sabine’s line and continues from there. A new title card with the standard *Rebels* audio cue is inserted between Ezra’s reaction shot and the *Phantom* flying toward the camera shortly after Sabine announces, “We’re going down!”

As with “Spark of Rebellion,” no content was lost. In fact, a new exterior shot was gained. It was again annoying, though, since the episode seemed designed more like “Spark of Rebellion” than “The Siege of Lothal” in that it appeared to have been designed as a single episode that was split, rather than two episodes that were merged after the fact.

For a More Digital Age (2016 – 2017, 2019)

The issues with the first two seasons were finally corrected for the third on iTunes, where the double-length season opener, “Steps Into Shadow,” and all other episodes were finally included in a single season pass. (Was that so hard, iTunes?)

The two-part mid-season tale “Ghosts of Geonosis” and season finale, “Zero Hour,” were both originally presented on Disney XD as two episodes airing the same night, rather than merged into a single, longer episode, so it is unsurprising that this was also how they were released digitally. “Steps Into Shadow,” which had aired as a single episode at both Celebration Europe and on Disney XD remained intact for digital release.

Like all previous *Rebels* digital releases thus far, other than “Spark of Rebellion,” the third season’s digital release did not include any bonus content.

The entire *Rebels* series (without any extras) became part of Disney+ at launch on Nov. 12, 2019. In the case of this season, “Steps Into Shadow”

was, unfortunately, split into two episodes as in the season's home video release.⁹⁴

The Final Word in the Story of *Rebels* (2018)

In keeping with the recent tradition of screening season premieres at conventions, the opening episode of *Rebels*' fourth season was shown to lucky attendees at Celebration Orlando on Apr. 15, 2017. The wait was longer this time between the convention and the television premiere on Disney XD, which did not finally happen until Oct. 16, 2017, six agonizingly long months later.⁹⁵ This was to be the final season of *Rebels*, but the team behind the series knew this in advance, allowing for a well-planned finale when the series finally ended on Mar. 5, 2018.

Rebels: Complete Season Four arrived on home video on Oct. 26, 2018. Unlike *The Clone Wars*, the physical release of the final season of *Rebels* was not accompanied by any sort of collected release like TCW's *Seasons 1 – 5 Collector's Edition* set. Instead, the final season was simply available on its own on both Blu-ray and DVD. As per usual, the DVD version came in a clear case, while the Blu-ray version was in a standard blue case. Each came with an embossed slipcover of identical artwork from an existing poster. Both also included Disney Movie Rewards points, redeemed via a generic Disney code slip.⁹⁶

This was a shorter season than the previous two, more in line with the first season's episode count.⁹⁷ As such, it came on two Blu-rays (labeled with Ezra and Sabine) or three DVDs (with the third label bearing C1-10P

⁹⁴ Again, to echo Maul: "Disneeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeey!"

⁹⁵ This was even agonizing to those who watched the premiere at Celebration, since it was just the first part of a two-parter. Which was worse, one has to wonder: the cliffhanger for that episode ("Heroes of Mandalore, Part 1") in your head for six months, or the end of the previous season as your last encounter with *Rebels* for seven months? I'm thinking the convention viewers might have been worse off.

⁹⁶ See the code slips with the 2019 film reissues in the chapter *All Together Now* in *Volume II* for more on that slip's design... or just look at the pictures.

⁹⁷ If we count "Spark of Rebellion" as two episodes and the shorts together as one episode, the first season had 16. If "Family Reunion – and Farewell" is treated as two episodes due to its length, this season also had 16 episodes.

AKA “Chopper”). Both included the *Rebels Recon* episodes for the season, allowing owners who had picked up all four seasons in either format to have a full run of physically-released *Rebels Recon* videos. DVD was treated even more poorly in relation to Blu-ray this time, however. Whereas the previous season provided *Rebels Recon* and one featurette on DVD, only *Rebels Recon* was included this time. All three of the season’s featurettes only appeared on Blu-ray.



Rebels: Complete Season Four
(Blu-ray, 2018)

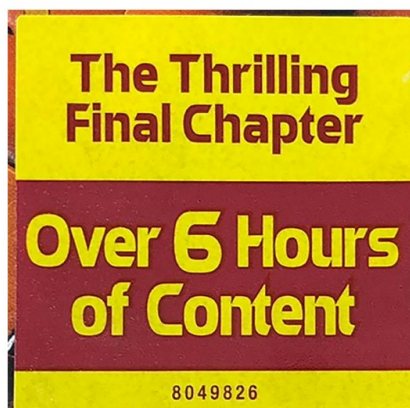
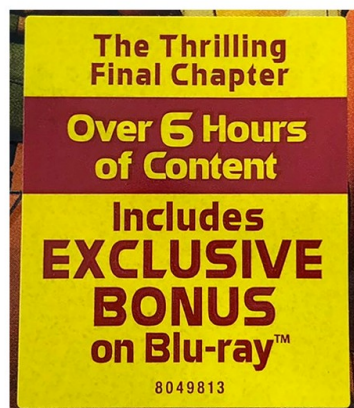
Rebels: Complete Season Four
(DVD, 2018)



Blu-ray bonus features included the aforementioned featurettes (*Ghosts of Legend*, *Force of Rebellion*, and *Kevin Kiner: The Rebel Symphony*), along with six audio commentaries (one more than in the previous season set). Audio commentaries were all by Dave Filoni alone and could be viewed with the episodes “Heroes of Mandalore, Parts 1 and 2,” “Jedi Night,” “Wolves and

a Door,” “A World Between Worlds,” and the series finale, “Family Reunion – and Farewell.”

Fortunately, for both releases, the double-length series finale, which had aired as one episode, was *not* split into two episodes for this release. It remained intact.⁹⁸ (“Heroes of Mandalore,” the season opener, had always been two parts.)



Like the previous seasons, the Blu-ray version's sticker (left) promoted itself. However, the DVD version's sticker (right) did not promote Blu-ray this time.

This was again a nice Blu-ray release, accompanied by a feature-poor DVD version. Unfortunately, the days of *Star Wars* cartoon series on Blu-ray were at an end. The next *Star Wars* cartoon, *Resistance*, would only see releases on DVD.⁹⁹

For a More Digital Age (2017 – 2018, 2019)

The final season of *Rebels* broke with the lackluster pattern of the previous three seasons by finally including some bonus content with its season pass. The bonus content wasn't much, just a trailer for the season and a four-minute featurette entitled *Sabine's Mandalorian Roots*, but when coupled with “Spark of Rebellion,” the only other *Rebels* digital release with

⁹⁸ It's almost as if Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment recognized the emotional gravity of the episode and left it as it was... Just kidding. They probably just didn't notice they'd left it intact.

⁹⁹ Yes, for the second and third seasons of *Rebels*, they basically advertised on the DVD packaging (via a sticker) that the Blu-ray version was superior. Now they would be sticking with DVD.

bonus content, it allowed the series to be bookended with purchases that came with more than just episodes of the series.

The entire *Rebels* series (without any extras) became part of Disney+ at launch on Nov. 12, 2019. In the case of this season, all of the episodes remained in their aired (and physical home media) format.

Conclusion: A Flawed Standard

From a content standpoint, Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment's home video releases of *Rebels* were a step down from the Warner Home Video releases for *The Clone Wars*. A fair amount of bonus content (*Rebels Recon* in particular) was already available elsewhere for free, double-length episodes were sometimes split into their two-part rerun versions instead of kept in their original form, and the series had not been produced in 2.35:1 aspect ratio, so a shift toward a more theatrical widescreen presentation like TCW was out of the question. *Rebels* also never saw anything akin to the amazing *Jedi Temple Archives* sections from Warner's TCW Blu-rays. These were solid enough releases when compared to many TV series' season sets, but compared to what we had seen with the previous flagship *Star Wars* cartoon series, it was still (perhaps irrationally) disappointing.

The gap between Blu-ray and DVD content also widened over time, making the DVD versions significantly more disappointing in relation to either those for TCW or their own Blu-ray contemporaries.

Still, there was *some* new bonus content for *Rebels* over the years, which allowed Blu-ray to remain a better option than digital for the moment. In an era in which physical home video releases needed to provide more and more reason to be purchased months later instead of simply purchasing digital episodes immediately after airing, these were solid enough releases to keep *Star Wars* fans buying physical copies... at least for now.

We could only hope that *Resistance* would see similar (or even stronger) releases when it reached home video. Those hopes would be in vain.

14 A HOME VIDEO KAZTASTROPHE (2019 – 2020)

The end of *Rebels* on Mar. 5, 2018, cleared the way for a new *Star Wars* cartoon to take the stage. Many fans suspected that the new series would likely focus somehow on the *Sequel Trilogy* era that was the primary focus of much of the franchise’s contemporary marketing and storytelling efforts. This was confirmed on Apr. 26, 2018, when the new series, entitled *Star Wars: Resistance*, was officially announced.

Dave Filoni returned as the creator of the new series, but it was clarified a few months later in Aug. 2018 that he would not be as involved in the production of the new series. After all, he had announced just one month earlier that *The Clone Wars* would return with a seventh, final season on Disney+. That revival of the earlier series would be his focus, along with his work with Jon Favreau on the upcoming *The Mandalorian* live action series for the streaming platform. Instead, *Resistance* would be helmed by supervising director Justin Ridge.

Resistance kicked off with the double-length episode “The Recruit” on Oct. 7, 2018, set approximately six months before *The Force Awakens*. By the time the show ended after only two seasons with “The Escape” on Jan. 26, 2020, it had moved through *Episodes VII – VIII* into the gap between *The Last Jedi* and *The Rise of Skywalker*, the latter of which had premiered just over one month earlier.

The series featured a “slow-burn” storytelling structure that was less epic in scope than the two preceding series and what some derided as “Disneyfied” animation (e.g. Kazuda “Kaz” Xiono’s limbs tended to flail like Goofy). It quickly became a more divisive series than *Rebels* had been. Love the series or hate it, one thing was certain. Its handling on home video was nothing short of Kaz’s well-earned nickname late in the series: a

Kaztastrophe.

No HD for You! (2019)

For years, *Star Wars* fans had been somewhat isolated from Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment's typical handling of television series. We had enjoyed *The Clone Wars: The Lost Missions* and all four seasons of *Rebels* being released on both DVD and Blu-ray. Even the first season of *LEGO Star Wars: The Freemaker Adventures* had been released on both formats.¹⁰⁰ However, this was not the norm for the studio's television series releases. Most Disney television series, if released on physical media at all, tended to only receive a DVD season set. The vast majority did not see Blu-ray release, even as the home video market shifted decidedly toward high (and ultra high) definition releases.

The first major disappointment in this regard came on Mar. 13, 2018, when the second season of *The Freemaker Adventures* was released only on DVD. "Yes," fans thought, "but that was 'only' a *LEGO Star Wars* series." Surely there was no way that a flagship *Star Wars* cartoon series like *Resistance* would receive such poor treatment!

Oh, we of *way* too much faith.

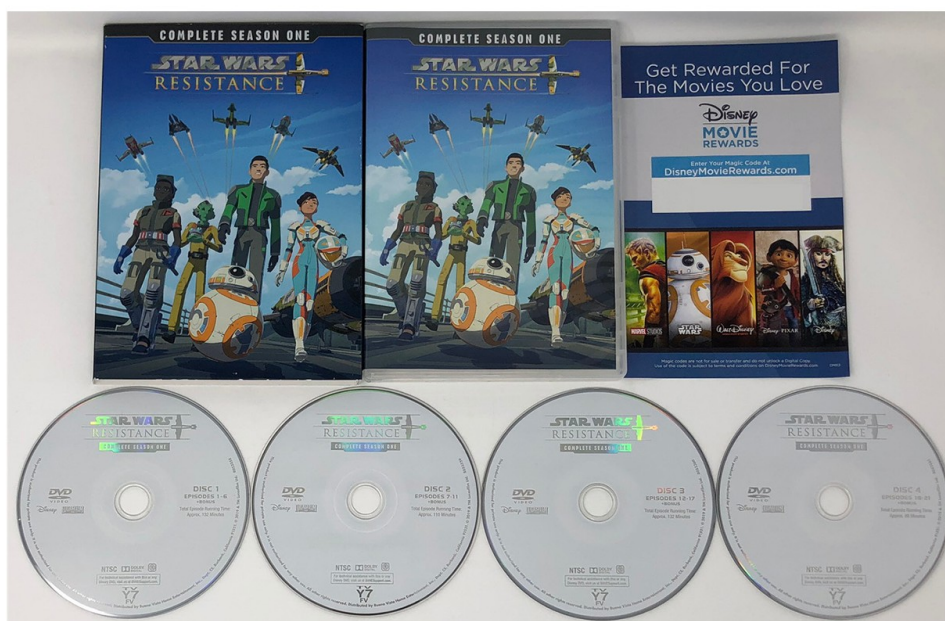
Resistance: Complete Season One arrived on home video on Aug. 20, 2019, having completed its run on Disney XD five months earlier on Mar. 17. Unlike *The Clone Wars* and *Rebels*, this release was available only on DVD. *Star Wars* series, it seemed, no longer warranted the kind of special treatment that TCW's *Lost Missions* or *Rebels* had received. If fans wanted to watch the series in high definition after its television airings, they would simply need to purchase digital copies or wait for the launch of Disney+.

Unlike contemporary *Star Wars* film releases, this season set included a slipcover over its clear DVD case. Artwork for both came from a promotional poster that originally bore the tagline, "Some heroes stick to the plan. Others just wing it."

Like the majority of TCW and *Rebels* season sets on DVD, this set included the season's 21 episodes (yes, "The Recruit" was kept in its double-length form instead of split into its rerun halves) across four discs. Labels were quite plain, lacking any characters (or color) in favor of a silver and white aesthetic similar to the DVD releases of *The Freemaker Adventures*. Bonus features included: the *Resistance Rewind* featurettes for each episode that had originally been released via the official *Star Wars* YouTube channel; 12 animated shorts that had originally been released Dec. 10 – 31, 2018, on

¹⁰⁰ See the chapter *Brick by Brick*.

YouTube via the Disney Channel; four audio commentaries with Christopher Sean (Kazuda “Kaz” Xiono), Myrna Velasco (Torra Doza), Scott Lawrence (Jarek Yeager), and Josh Brener (Neeku Vozo) for the episodes “The High Tower,” “The Platform Classic,” “Bibo,” and “No Escape, Part 2;” and a new featurette that looked back on the first season and ahead to the second, entitled *Path of Resistance* (hosted mostly by supervising director Justin Ridge, the “face” of the series as Filoni had been for the previous two series). A Disney Movie Rewards points code was also included on a generic slip like those in this year's DVD film reissues.



Resistance: Complete Season One (DVD, 2019)

While most of the bonus features were recycled from YouTube, the new featurette was a nice touch, and the audio commentaries were quite welcome, even if there were only a few. However, no amount of bonus content could have made up for the lack of a Blu-ray release of this season in the eyes of home video collectors. It was seen as a ridiculous move in 2019, and it did not bode well for future *Star Wars* television series releases. If the DVD-only release of *The Freemaker Adventures: Complete Season Two* had left fans wary of what might come next, this release had collectors dreading how the second season would be handled, if it even received a physical release at all.

For a More Digital Age (2018 – 2019)

The first season of *Resistance* was available on typical online outlets like iTunes. Unfortunately, the iTunes season pass did not provide any bonus content.

This season was also available (without any extras) on Disney+ at launch on Nov. 12, 2019, just 84 days after its home video release. Strangely, whereas the digital and physical home video releases kept “The Recruit” as one double-length episode, the Disney+ version split it into its two halves as on subsequent airings. That’s a bit of a reversal from what we are used to, but I suppose it *does* deserve a sidebar to detail the changes, so...

Changes for Better and/or Worse:

***Resistance: Season One* on Disney+ (2019)**

It would appear that “The Recruit” may have been planned like I expect “The Siege of Lothal” was planned for *Rebels*, as two episodes merged into one, rather than always having been planned as a single episode. As such, the change between one and two episodes was pretty simple this time around.

In the original version, Poe Dameron leaves midway through the story, then the blast door to Aunt Z’s tavern slams shut, cutting off our view of Kaz, BB-8, and other patrons. It then immediately shifts to a shot of Aces flying past the Colossus and continues from there.

“The Recruit” (now “The Recruit, Part 1”)

Once the blast door slams shut, the *Resistance* logo and end credits run. That’s it.

“The Recruit” (now “The Recruit, Part 2”)

The second episode starts with the Aces flying near the Colossus, so it picks up exactly where the previous episode left off from the original airing. However, since this is a separate episode now, the series’ brief opening logo and fanfare is inserted between a shot of Kaz reacting to seeing Bo Keevil’s *Yellow Ace* blasted by another Ace and the next shot of the Aces zooming around. Nothing is removed, and the only thing added is the expected series title.

This was an exceptionally clean split of one episode into two.

Lost in Space (2020)

The second season of *Resistance* began with the episode “Into the Unknown” on Oct. 6, 2019, after having been previewed at *Star Wars* Celebration Chicago on Apr. 15. The season (and series) wrapped up with the double-length episode “The Escape” on Jan. 26, 2020.

To date, this season has not seen a physical home media release.

For a More Digital Age (2019 – 2020)

The second (final) season of *Resistance* came to iTunes and other digital retailers as expected. Just like the previous season, the season pass did not include bonus content.

This season (without any extras) became available on Disney+ on Feb. 25, 2020, 30 days after its run on Disney XD ended. Like with “The Recruit” for the first season, the second season’s double-length finale, “The Escape,” was cut into its two rerun halves for Disney+, while the digital release for purchase on platforms like iTunes kept the episode intact.

Changes for Better and/or Worse:

***Resistance: Season Two* on Disney+ (2020)**

As originally aired, the midpoint of “The Escape” has the *Colossus* losing Kaz and Yeager’s signal. Captain Imanuel Doza states that he will wait for them to respond, then make a decision from there. Venisa Doza then asks, “And if they don’t respond, Imanuel?” We see the captain’s reaction in a close-up shot as the music swells and the screen goes black. We then pick up with a shot of Pyre’s *Resurgent*-class First Order Star Destroyer and continue into the second half of the tale.

“The Escape” (now “The Escape, Part 1”)

In the split version, the shot of the Star Destroyer doesn’t appear. Instead, the black screen transitions into tense music and the series’ end logo and credits.

***The Escape* (now “The Escape, Part 2”)**

The second episode picks up with the shot of the Star Destroyer, exactly where the first episode left off. It then adds the *Resistance* opening logo and fanfare between when we see the heroes on the Star Destroyer running from blaster fire and the following shot of the *Colossus* in space.

Again, this was a *very* clean split without any added or lost shots, other than the series’ typical opening/closing logos and credits.

Conclusion: Substandard Series, Substandard Releases

Put mildly, *Resistance* was certainly a weaker series overall than *The Clone Wars* or *Rebels*. Even with its smaller scope, less *Star Wars* feel much of the time, and “Disneyfied” goofiness in some instances, however, it was still a television series aired in 2018 – 2020. One can certainly understand if a series released in that time frame were to be available only digitally. In fact, such an utter eschewing of physical home media may have been preferable to seeing a *Star Wars* series aired in this era released only on DVD. It was a

slap in the face to fans of physical media and yet another strike against *Resistance* in the eyes of many fans. Sure, it was Disney's *modus operandi* for their contemporary television series, but this was *Star Wars*, and *Rebels* had not been treated this poorly on home media.

It also left an unanswered question to nag at the minds of collectors. Given how Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment treated *Resistance*, what hope did Disney+ series like *The Mandalorian* have for physical releases? Would Disney+ series fare any better than their most recent Disney XD *Star Wars* brethren?

15 EMPIRE OF STREAMS¹⁰¹

(2019 – 2021)

In summer 2017, Jon Favreau was well-known to many *Star Wars* fans, having a storied career that included, among many other things, work with the Marvel Cinematic Universe (directing the first two *Iron Man* films, in which he also appeared as Happy Hogan) and voicing Pre Vizsla in *The Clone Wars*. It was around that time that Favreau was working on the “live action” version of *The Lion King* and soon pitched the idea for the show that would become *The Mandalorian* to Kathleen Kennedy, president of Lucasfilm. She put him in touch with Dave Filoni, who was currently overseeing *Rebels* as its final season was about to launch. The two began brainstorming a *Star Wars* live action series.

Hints about this series began to trickle out, most notably through Bob Iger, chairman and CEO of Walt Disney Company, during conference calls with investors. He revealed the existence of a live action *Star Wars* series on a call in Nov. 2017, then further clarified that multiple live action series were in development in Feb. 2018. All were aimed at Disney’s upcoming streaming service, which would not have its name (Disney+) revealed until Nov. 8, 2018. Favreau was officially announced as the writer and executive producer of the first of these live action series on Mar. 8, 2018, and Favreau himself announced the series’ title of *The Mandalorian* and general premise on Oct. 3, 2018. More of the creative team was announced the following

¹⁰¹ This is my favorite chapter title in this guide, and it wasn’t my idea. Credit goes to fellow collector Jared Bell, who answered the call when I was stuck for a title.

day, including the revelation of Filoni's involvement and that four Hollywood heavy-hitters would be directing episodes of the first season: Taika Waititi; Bryce Dallas Howard; Rick Famuyiwa; and Deborah Chow.

Excitement for the series was palpable. When footage was briefly shown to fans at *Star Wars* Celebration Chicago on Apr. 14, 2019, but no one outside the room was allowed to see it, as the footage was some of the only content of the entire convention to be blacked out on its livestream, fans lashed out, appeased only by various bootleg recordings of the event. The first real trailer arrived online on Aug. 23, 2019, followed by its second two months later on Oct. 28, less than a month prior to the series' launch.

The stage was set for one of the world's most dominant brands to premiere its own streaming service with the first live action series for one of the world's most well-known franchises as one of its greatest selling points...

The Mando and the Child (2019)

The first episode of *The Mandalorian* premiered on Nov. 12, 2019, alongside Disney+ itself. The first season of the series was released episode-by-episode, rather than using the then-typical all-at-once release strategy of many streaming services (e.g. *The Clone Wars: The Lost Missions* on Netflix in 2014). The second episode ("The Child") followed three days after the premiere on Nov. 15, then the other six episodes (or "chapters," as they were called) followed weekly through Dec. 27 with the only exception being the penultimate episode ("The Reckoning"), released two days early due to the Christmas holiday.

For a season of only eight episodes, the impact of the series was like a nuclear blast in both fandom and pop culture. The Child (AKA "Baby Yoda," who was not Yoda, as fans had to explain constantly) became an immediate pop cultural phenomenon, and the show's two primary catchphrases ("This is the way," and "I have spoken") became ubiquitous in fandom.

The series' place in *Star Wars* is obvious. It was the first *Star Wars* live action series and only the second season of a *Star Wars* television show (live action or animated) to premiere via a streaming service instead of on broadcast or cable television. It launched a new cast of characters (Din Djarin, Carasynthia "Cara" Dune, Greef Karga, Moff Gideon, IG-11, Kuill, the Armorer, and, yes, the Child) in an era that the Story Group's rebooted saga had not yet explored, five years after *Return of the Jedi*.¹⁰² Perhaps most

¹⁰² That put the story 4 years after the Battle of Jakku and 25 years before *The Force Awakens*, 6 years before Rey (later Rey Skywalker) was even born. Ironically, this

importantly, it provided something that an extremely and perhaps irreconcilably divided fandom could rally around. It was one hell of a show.

But the question loomed: *The Mandalorian* was a Disney+ exclusive. Would it see a physical home video release?

Whether it will *ever* see a physical release is unknown, but as of the time of the publication of this guide in late 2021, the series has not been made available on physical media, nor has it been released for purchase digitally. It remains a Disney+ exclusive.

Star Wars home video collectors hold out some hope that the series will eventually see physical release, just as *Star Trek: Discovery*, another recent streaming service exclusive sci-fi series, has seen home video release a while after its weekly CBS All Access (later Paramount+) streaming service airings. Then again, even if a physical release does come, our experience with *Resistance: Complete Season One* and *LEGO Star Wars: The Freemaker Adventures: Complete Season Two* has taught us to be careful what we wish for. Would we really want to see this series, which premiered in Ultra HD on Disney+, possibly released only on standard definition DVD?

For a More Digital Age (2019)

The Mandalorian premiered alongside Disney+ on Nov. 12, 2019, and its first season ran for eight episodes, ending on Dec. 27, 2019. It remains a Disney+ exclusive. A trailer for the season was included among its extras.

Legacy Launch Content (2019 – 2020)

The Mandalorian was not alone in representing the saga on Disney+ at launch on Nov. 12, 2019. A fairly large amount of *Star Wars* content was available, which was to be expected, given that it was now one of Disney's three primary pillars of the service, alongside Marvel and original Disney works.

As discussed in the chapter *All Together Now* in *Volume II*, the 2019 (AKA “Maclunkey”) cuts of *Episodes I – VI* were available at launch, along with TFA and *Rogue One*. (TLJ would join the service in Dec. 2019, followed by TROS and *Solo* in May and July, 2020, respectively.)

The Clone Wars film and all six existing seasons of the series were available at launch with a trailer for the film as an “extra.” (The seventh

landmark moment in *Star Wars* storytelling was set half a decade after ROTJ, the exact same timeframe as the novel that launched the Legends continuity in 1991, Timothy Zahn's *Heir to the Empire*.

season was still three months away.) *Rebels* was included (with its shorts), as was the first season of *Resistance*, which was a better experience for fans of the latter, given that the home video release had only been on DVD.¹⁰³ (The final season of *Resistance*, which was still airing when Disney+ launched, would join the service three months later.)

Some *LEGO Star Wars* content that had previously seen physical release was also present: *Droid Tales*; *The New* (but not original) *Yoda Chronicles* (with the alternate ending for “Clash of the Skywalkers” merged into the episode as a separate, full episode, entitled “Duel of the Skywalkers”); and both seasons of *The Freemaker Adventures* and the series’ shorts. For all but the first season of *The Freemaker Adventures*, which had previously been released on Blu-ray, this was an upgrade to HD content for series previously only available physically in SD.

Some animated productions that never saw physical release were also among the *Star Wars* offerings at launch. These included: *LEGO Star Wars All-Stars* (and its shorts); *The Resistance Rises*; *Forces of Destiny* (as its 16 individual episodes, no collected volumes or extras); and *Blips* (also without extras).¹⁰⁴ As the others have been covered previously in this guide, only *Blips* requires some explanation. This was a series of comedic shorts that featured BB-8, which were released on the official *Star Wars* YouTube channel May 3 – Sept. 4, 2017.

An edited, HD version of the *Empire of Dreams* documentary was also available. This was the sole standalone documentary special for the saga on the service until *Galaxy’s Edge: Adventure Awaits* arrived on Mar. 27, 2020. (It had aired less than two full months before Disney+ launched, so it hadn’t been part of the launch lineup.)¹⁰⁵

Also in the period shortly after the first season of *The Mandalorian* and its *Disney Gallery* companion series, yet not among content on launch day, was the *Phineas and Ferb: Star Wars* animated special, which joined the service on

¹⁰³ See the chapters *Rewriting the Clone Wars*, *Joining the Rebellion* and *A Home Video Kaztastrophe* for more on these series, including the Disney+ exclusive final season of TCW in the former.

¹⁰⁴ See the chapter *Brick by Brick* for information about *All-Stars* and *The Resistance Rises*. See *Enter: Disney* in *Volume II* for information about *Forces of Destiny* as part of coverage of the 2017 Walmart reissues.

¹⁰⁵ See the chapter *Rise of DVD, Demise of VHS* in *Volume I* for *Empire of Dreams* and *Behind the Curtain* for *Galaxy’s Edge: Adventure Awaits*.

Feb. 28, 2020.¹⁰⁶

Behind the Helmet (2020)

Beginning on May 4, 2020¹⁰⁷ (the same day the seventh season of TCW ended on the service, as covered earlier in this guide), Disney+ released episodes of another new *Star Wars* series. This was a trip behind-the-scenes of *The Mandalorian*, entitled *Disney Gallery: The Mandalorian*. In each episode, members of the creative team (sometimes multiple different groups from within the creative team) engaged in insightful roundtable discussions about the making of the series. After its May 4 premiere episode, the other seven aired weekly from May 8 – June 19, 2020.

Of course, one would hope that if and when *The Mandalorian* receives a physical home video release, this series would be included as bonus content, similar to *Rebels Recon* or *Resistance Rewind*. For now, whether *Disney Gallery: The Mandalorian* will see a physical release at all is perhaps even more up in the air than the fate of the show that inspired it.

For a More Digital Age (2020)

Disney Gallery: The Mandalorian ran for eight regular episodes from May 4 – June 19, 2020. It remains a Disney+ exclusive. A trailer for the series was included in the extras section.

Connective Tissue (2020)

The second season of *The Mandalorian* premiered on Disney+ on Oct. 30, 2020, and saw new episodes released weekly (without any odd exceptions this time) through Dec. 18, 2020. This eight-episode (“chapter”) season further developed the story of the series but also provided more connective tissue with the broader saga by bringing in characters like Bo-Katan Kryze and Ahsoka Tano, both of whom had been created for *The Clone Wars* and later appeared in *Rebels*. This season also finally revealed the real name of “Baby Yoda” AKA “the Child” as “Grogu.” Unfortunately, as with the previous season, this sophomore outing for Din Djarin and company has not yet seen a physical home media release, if it ever will.

Interestingly, this season provided fodder for further discussion in fandom about the need for physical media. The Nov. 20 episode, “The

¹⁰⁶ See the chapter *A Cantina Full of Oddballs*.

¹⁰⁷ Yes, the same day that Disney+ released the final episode of *The Clone Wars*.

Siege,” featured a scene of Djarin, Greef Karga, and Cara Dune blasting their way out of a complex on Nevarro run by Moff Gideon. In one particular shot, a production crew member in a green tee-shirt, blue jeans, and a watch (or bracelet) could be seen on the left side of the shot in the background. One week later, simultaneous to the Nov. 27 release of “The Jedi” that drew attention for the live action debut of Ahsoka, Disney+ also quietly swapped out the source file for “The Siege” with a new version with the errant crew member digitally removed from the scene. This was obviously an improvement to the episode, just correcting an error that never should have been there, but it again provided an example of digital content being replaced (akin to the 2015 digital versions of *Episodes I – III* and *V – VI* being replaced by the 2019 “Maclunkey” versions from Disney+ on digital outlets like iTunes) as if the original version never existed. In this case, the issue was even more egregious (in terms of media replacement, though not the minor issue that caused it), since there had been no way to purchase the episodes as they aired, meaning that a legal copy without the change had never existed, outside of the Disney+ app’s limited “download to watch later” feature.

For a More Digital Age (2020)

The Mandalorian’s second season was released via Disney+ from Oct. 30 – Dec. 18, 2020, with new episodes released weekly during its run. It remains a Disney+ exclusive. A trailer for the season, a recap of the first season, and a promotional “special look” at the second season were all included among this season’s extras.

Changes for Better and/or Worse:

***The Mandalorian: The Siege* (2020)**

Rather than an episode losing or gaining content as we’ve seen with previous series, “The Siege” merely saw the removal of one element (“Jeans Guy”) in one particular scene to fix an error.

Jeans Guy now joins the infamous *Game of Thrones* Starbucks coffee cup in deleted oblivion, and the episode is better for it, even though the entire incident raises quite a few questions about the nature of digital-only content for collectors.

Beyond the Rise of Rey Skywalker (2020)

On Nov. 17, 2020, the 22nd Anniversary of *The Star Wars Holiday Special*, a new *LEGO Star Wars Holiday Special* premiered on Disney+. This special, notable as the first *Star Wars* tale (albeit non-canonical) to be set after *The Rise of Skywalker*, will be covered in more detail in the next chapter, *Brick by*

Brick.

Twice More Behind the Helmet (2020 – 2021)

Dec. 25, 2020, brought both excitement and disappointment for fans of the excellent first season of *Disney Gallery: The Mandalorian*. Just one week after *The Mandalorian*'s season two finale, its *Disney Gallery* companion series returned... but with only a single “special” to cover the entire second season, rather than individual episodes. This was a more traditional behind-the-scenes special, rather than the in-depth, highly-enjoyable roundtable discussion format of the previous episodes, and, in order to avoid spoilers, it did not even remotely address the return of Mark Hamill (with body double Max Lloyd-Jones as the base for some CGI magic) as a 28-year-old Luke Skywalker. It wasn't exactly a lump of coal for Christmas, but it certainly wasn't what we'd hoped for after the original eight episodes the previous year.

Exactly 8 months later (and 12 days after the end of the first season of *The Bad Batch*), these frustrations were somewhat addressed on Aug. 25, 2021, when *Disney Gallery: The Mandalorian* returned with a new episode, labeled as “S2:E2” (as if this was the second episode of a second season of the program, which retroactively tried to make the disappointing previous episode, billed originally as a special, into just the first in a season with a *very* long break). That episode, entitled “Making of Season 2 Finale,” focused exclusively on the second season's final episode (“The Rescue”), which had been neglected in the previous installment. More specifically, it focused almost entirely on the return of Luke Skywalker, addressing numerous aspects of the creative process.¹⁰⁸ Like Luke in that season finale, I suppose the episode arrived a little late but still in time to save the day for *Disney Gallery*.

For a More Digital Age (2020 – 2021)

The first episode of *Disney Gallery: The Mandalorian* to focus on the second season premiered on Disney+ on Dec. 25, 2020. The second episode, focused on the season's finale, premiered on the platform on Aug. 25, 2021. Both remain exclusive to Disney+.

¹⁰⁸ This episode actually bothered me a bit, as its discussion of Luke's return referenced the actor who portrayed younger Luke on the set but never gave his full name. It reminded me too much of Katie Lucas taking credit for creating the Nightsisters in TCW bonus features.

Not Legacy Content... A Vintage Collection (2021)

About one month before the launch of the next new *Star Wars* animated series, *The Bad Batch*, a selection of classic *Star Wars* television content was added to Disney+ as the *Vintage* collection on Apr. 2, 2021. These included: the two Ewok telemovies; the animated *Ewoks* and *Clone Wars* series; and the animated segment from *The Star Wars Holiday Special*, known as *The Story of the Faithful Wookiee*. On June 18, once *The Bad Batch* was in full swing, *Droids* also joined the *Vintage* collection.¹⁰⁹

The Series No One Requested... That was Pretty Good (2021)

If *The Mandalorian* was the springboard from which other live action series (e.g. *The Book of Boba Fett*, *Ahsoka*) would take flight, it was *The Clone Wars* that served that function for animation. After cheating “death” by continuing with a sixth season on Netflix after its Cartoon Network run was prematurely canceled, the series managed to return from the cartoon graveyard *again* for a seventh (final) season on Disney+. It wouldn’t end there, though, at least from a certain point of view...

Two months after *The Clone Wars* came to an end (for the third time) with “Victory and Death” on Disney+, it was announced on July 13, 2020, that a new animated series, based on Clone Force 99, was in the works.

Clone Force 99, or the “Bad Batch,” was a concept with an unusual history, even for the convoluted “done and back again” nature of *The Clone Wars*. When the series was originally canceled after the fifth season and 13 episodes that were already in production were completed for Netflix release as *The Lost Missions*, the story arc that introduced the Bad Batch (consisting of Hunter, Tech, Wrecker, and Crosshair at the time) was not among those that made the cut. Instead, the episodes were a second batch of four (after the *Crystal Crisis on Utapau* arc) to be released online as unfinished story reels on Apr. 29, 2015.¹¹⁰

Five years later, when the seventh season arrived on Disney+, those four episodes (“The Bad Batch,” “A Distant Echo,” “On the Wings of Keeradaks,” and “Unfinished Business”) were completed (including some minor tweaks) to become the first released (but second chronological) arc

¹⁰⁹ See the chapter *Teddy Bears, Towanis, and Trouble Again* for all but the *Clone Wars* series, which is instead covered in the chapter *Genndy Goes Micro*.

¹¹⁰ The story reels were first shown as *Star Wars* Celebration Anaheim on Apr. 17, 2015.

of the final season of *The Clone Wars*. Little did we realize that these bizarre, “imperfect” clones of Jango Fett would soon be announced as the titular heroes of an entire new series, making that arc a similar springboard for Hunter’s team as the second season of *The Mandalorian* had been for Boba Fett and Ahsoka Tano’s two new series.

Thus, the immediate continuation of *The Clone Wars* in animation, *The Bad Batch*, premiered exactly one year after the end of *The Clone Wars* on May 4, 2021. The new series began with a double-length episode, “Aftermath,” which crossed over with ROTS (and thus the final arc of its progenitor series). Now, Clone Force 99 included former Domino Squad member and ARC trooper Echo, who joined the team at the end of their TCW arc. By the end of the premiere episode, the status quo had changed again, making Crosshair a “new” villain and supplementing Clone Force 99, now on the run from the Empire, with a young, female clone, Omega.

By the end of the season’s sixteen episodes, fans would see the return of Caleb Dume (AKA Kanan Jarrus), Wilhuff Tarkin, Cad Bane, a very young Hera Syndulla, Chopper, and more. It would also provide an expanded role in the saga for Fennec Shand, who had made her debut in *The Mandalorian* and would continue the role in *The Book of Boba Fett*.

This first season released new episodes each Friday (beginning on May 7, 2021, just three days after the premiere for “*Star Wars* Day”) until its season finale, “Kamino Lost,” on Aug. 13. As one might have expected of Disney+ content by now, the first season of *The Bad Batch* has yet to see a physical home media release.

For a More Digital Age (2021)

The Bad Batch’s first season premiered on Disney+ on May 4, 2021, and ran through Aug. 13 of the same year. It remains a Disney+ exclusive. A trailer for the first season was included in the extras section.

Biomes, Vehicles, and Naps (2021)

On May 4, 2021, the same day as the premiere episode of *The Bad Batch*, other new *Star Wars* content appeared on Disney+ with far less fanfare.

The longest item among this new content was a special called *Star Wars Biomes*, which ran about 18 min. While one might have assumed a program with that title to be a documentary on the worlds of *Star Wars* and their ecosystems, it was instead described as a “virtual vacation,” featuring narration-free fly-throughs of various *Star Wars* landscapes, including Hoth, Tatooine, Sorgan, Crait, Mustafar, and Ahch-To.

Two other fly-throughs made up a small series of shorts, *Star Wars Vehicle Flythroughs*, which included 4 – 5 min. videos taking viewers through the *Millennium Falcon* and a First Order *Resurgent*-class Star Destroyer.

The most unusual item in this wave of May 4, 2021, content was a “crossover” between *Star Wars* and *The Simpsons* (in a similar vein to *Phineas and Ferb: Star Wars*¹¹¹, rather than a typical parody, though it’s a very fine line). Entitled *Maggie Simpson in The Force Awakens from Its Nap*, this was just a quick, 3 min. short in which Maggie Simpson encountered various *Star Wars* characters and familiar *Simpsons* characters altered to fit into the *Star Wars* universe as she sought her missing pacifier during a day at her Jedi “Sky Toddlers” daycare.

For a More Digital Age (2021)

All of these May 4, 2021, additions to Disney+ remain Disney+ exclusives. None included any extras.

The Story Behind the Rides (2021)

The lines between Disney properties can sometimes blur on Disney+, especially when programs relating to its theme parks come into play. A little over a year after ABC’s *Galaxy’s Edge: Adventure Awaits* was added to the streaming service, a brand new documentary series about Disney’s theme parks launched. Unlike the *Galaxy’s Edge* special, this new series, *Behind the Attraction*, was a Disney+ exclusive, rather than something previously aired on “normal” television. Among its 10 episodes (half of which were released on July 21, 2021, while the other half were released on Aug. 25, 2021), the series covered such classic attractions as *Jungle Cruise* and *Haunted Mansion* (both of which were the basis of later films).

The third episode, the only one focused specifically on *Star Wars*, was ostensibly about the *Star Tours* (1987 – 2010) and *Star Tours: The Adventures Continue* (2011 – present) rides at Disneyland in California, Disney’s Hollywood Studios at Walt Disney World in Florida, Japan’s Tokyo Disneyland, and France’s Disneyland Paris. The episode actually covered even more, addressing how both *Star Tours* rides played a role in setting the stage for *Galaxy’s Edge* (2019 – present) in California and Florida.

For a More Digital Age (2021)

This series (including the episode about *Star Tours*) remains a Disney+ exclusive, where it includes one extra (a trailer for the series).

¹¹¹ See the chapter *A Cantina Full of Oddballs*.

Japanese Influences Come Full Circle (2021)

It has been well-known that George Lucas was heavily influenced by elements of Japanese cinema, particularly the works of Akira Kurosawa. From time to time, *Star Wars* has seen obvious homages to Japanese films, such as the *Godzilla*-esque Zillo Beast episodes of *The Clone Wars*.

American audiences had also seen instances of *Star Wars* manga content that reached the states, including Dark Horse Comics releasing imported adaptations of the *Original Trilogy* and TPM (1998 – 2000) and later translated Tokyopop manga stories in *Star Wars Manga: Black and Silver* (2006). More recently, we had seen imported manga adaptations of *Lost Stars*, *The Legends of Luke Skywalker*, *Leia: Princess of Alderaan*, *Guardians of the Whills*, and stories from episodes of *Rebels*. *The High Republic*, a major new era of *Star Wars* storytelling that launched with a short story in *Star Wars Insider* in Dec. 2020, even included its own original manga, beginning with *The Edge of Balance, Vol. 1* in Sept. 2021. However, despite this relatively small (but growing) lineup of manga *Star Wars* content, we had not yet seen *Star Wars* content take the next step into anime (Japanese animation).



Star Wars Manga: A New Hope issues 1 – 4 (1998)



Lost Stars (manga adaptation) issues 1 – 3 (2018 – 2019)

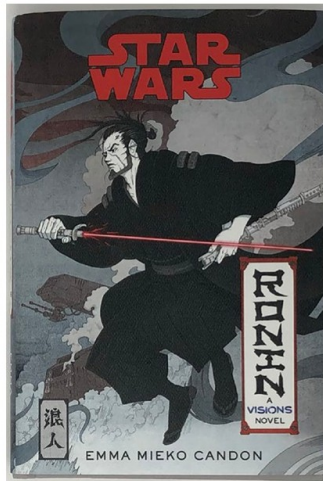


The Edge of Balance, Vol. 1 (2021)

That all changed the same month that *The Edge of Balance, Vol. 1* hit

bookshelves. Back on Dec. 10, 2020, during a Disney Investor Day event, Kathleen Kennedy had announced a new *Star Wars* anime series destined for Disney+. Known as *Visions*, it would include nine *Star Wars* anime stories, told by seven well-known anime studios: Kamikaze Douga; Geno Studio; Studio Colorido; Trigger (who would produce two episodes); Kinema Citrus; Science SARU (the other studio to produce a pair of episodes); and Production IG. Rather than following a weekly release format like all other previous *Star Wars* original series on Disney+, the entire *Visions* lineup of nine short films arrived at once (similar to the Netflix release of *The Clone Wars: The Lost Missions* in 2014) on Sept. 22, 2021.

Freed from the constraints of having to adhere to the existing *Star Wars* canon (as it was defined post-reboot), the series explored the saga through a new lens, even opening the door to further storytelling, such as the *Visions* tie-in novel *Ronin* by Emma Mieko Candon the following month.



Ronin (2021)

For a More Digital Age (2021)

All of *Visions* arrived on Disney+ on Sept. 22, 2021. It remains a Disney+ exclusive. The extras section for the series was rather robust, including a trailer, along with ten episodes of a featurette series called *Filmmaker Focus*. Each featurette, which ran 5 – 7 min., focused on one of the episodes of the series, with the exception of an initial featurette, entitled *Origins*, that addressed the premise of the series as whole.

Soundscapes (2021)

One week after the premiere of *Visions*, another odd little *Star Wars* video series joined Disney+ on Sept. 29, 2021. Like *Vehicle Flythroughs* and *Biomes* before it, this new series, *Galaxy of Sounds*, wasn't really a "show,"

per se, but a sort of showcase of an aspect of the saga. Whereas *Biomes* had been all about the landscapes of *Star Wars*, this new program was about soundscapes. Its seven episodes, all released on the same day, running approx. 7 – 9 min. each, presented what were essentially dialogue-free, music-free, thematically-grouped clips that highlighted the sound design of *Episodes I – IX*, the two anthology films, and *The Mandalorian*.

For a More Digital Age (2021)

Galaxy of Sounds remains a Disney+ exclusive after being launched on Sept. 29, 2021, without any extras.

The *Star Wars* Halloween Special (2021)

Two days after the rather quiet launch of *Galaxy of Sounds*, a second original *LEGO Star Wars* special premiered on Disney+. *LEGO Star Wars: Terrifying Tales* became the first *Star Wars* Halloween special.¹¹²

Beneath the Armor (2021)

With hype building for the premiere of *The Book of Boba Fett*, the titular bounty hunter's spinoff from *The Mandalorian*, a short documentary about the character, *Under the Helmet: The Legacy of Boba Fett*, premiered on Disney+ Day 2021 (i.e. Nov. 12, 2021, the second anniversary of the launch of the streaming platform).¹¹³

Meet the New Boss (2021)

After fans had already had their minds blown by the last several minutes of the main story of “The Rescue,” the finale of *The Mandalorian*'s sophomore season, a post-credits scene tossed another bombshell into our already scattered gray matter, as Boba Fett and Fennec Shand returned to Tatooine to depose Bib Fortuna from the throne of Jabba the Hutt, who had been killed by Leia Organa half a decade earlier. The stage was set for a new series, starring Temuera Morrison and Ming-Na Wen: *The Book of Boba Fett*.

At the time of this guide's publication, the series premiere of *The Book of Boba Fett* is scheduled to arrive on Dec. 29, 2021, with the series continuing into early 2022.

¹¹² See the chapter *Brick by Brick*.

¹¹³ See the chapter *Behind the Curtain*.

For a More Digital Age (2021 – 2022)

While one cannot say for certain, since it has not premiered yet, it is a safe bet that *The Book of Boba Fett* will remain a Disney+ exclusive for the foreseeable future after its premiere on Dec. 29, 2021.

Conclusion: Forever Exclusive?

Original *Star Wars* content from Disney+ has been well-received and generally considered to be quite good, even touted by many as better than anything else provided for the Story Group's *Star Wars* canon since its launch in 2014. The provision of that content on physical media, however, has been non-existent. The question lingers as to whether this new content will ever break free of Disney+ exclusivity to be available for collectors to legally own on physical media (or even digitally with all the baggage that entails).

We stand at a crossroads. As always with a turning point in *Star Wars* home video, we balance hope with wariness.

This is the way.

16 **BRICK BY BRICK** (2005 – 2021)

Since the first *Episode I* LEGO items rolled off the production lines in 1999, LEGO and *Star Wars* have been a great match, leading to a huge licensed product line of LEGO sets based on the franchise, well-reviewed video games, and cartoons (both online and on television) that have told *Star Wars* stories in comedic form. *LEGO Star Wars* content finally entered the realm of full-length episodes on television with the premiere of *LEGO Star Wars: The Padawan Menace* on Cartoon Network on July 22, 2011.

Here was a franchise that could make its way to home video with an added twist. Since *LEGO Star Wars* products like guidebooks had sometimes included exclusive LEGO minifigures, such as in the case of 2009's *LEGO Star Wars: The Visual Dictionary*, hopes were high that if *The Padawan Menace* and any subsequent *LEGO Star Wars* adventures were to come to home video, exclusive LEGO goodies would flow.

Instead, the *LEGO Star Wars* home video line has been a saga with a few bright spots amidst a plethora of disappointments.

Baby Brick Steps (2005, 2008)

Before we delve into standalone *LEGO Star Wars* releases, we should note that the first *LEGO Star Wars* content to air on Cartoon Network was not a full-length episode. Instead, it was a five minute segment from Treehouse Animation called *Revenge of the Brick*, a parody of *Revenge of the Sith*, which aired May 8, 2005.

Such a short video would never receive a release of its own, so it was fortunate that other *Star Wars* content from Cartoon Network, the *Clone Wars* micro-series, was to be released as well. This allowed 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment to include *Revenge of the Brick* as a bonus feature on the

Clone Wars, Vol. 2 DVD release on Dec. 6, 2005.¹¹⁴ It was also provided on a bonus DVD with a 2008 wall calendar.¹¹⁵

A Blu-ray, a DVD, and a Minifigure (2011, 2016)

LEGO Star Wars: The Padawan Menace arrived on home video on Sept. 16, 2011, the same day that *The Complete Saga*, *Prequel Trilogy*, and *Original Trilogy* premiered on Blu-ray. This release set an immediate high standard for *LEGO Star Wars* home video products, even among such distinguished company. This was a Blu-ray/DVD combo pack from 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment that came in a standard, blue Blu-ray case that slipped into a larger, cardboard package that housed an exclusive LEGO minifigure of Young Han Solo (AKA “Ian”¹¹⁶). Both discs included the same extras, allowing the feature *and* all bonus content to be watched in either high or standard definition. These extras included previous short LEGO videos *The Quest for R2-D2*, *Bombad Bounty*, *Star Wars in 2 Minutes (Parts 1 and 2)*, and *The Clone Wars Animated Comics*.

As far as physical features, the artwork on the outer slipcover matched that of the Blu-ray case, featuring Yoda in the foreground with Ian/Han right behind him to the viewer’s left. Farther behind were C-3PO and R2-D2, along with battle images to either side of Yoda. This artwork was somewhat split to create the disc labels, which used the background landscape for both Blu-ray and DVD, while only Yoda carried over to the former and only Ian/Han to the latter.

This package, which was originally released through Walmart but then had a wider release, was exceptional. It was the first Blu-ray/DVD combo pack ever released for a *Star Wars* product (by two years), duplicated all bonus content for both formats, and included a minifigure. To date, this was the absolute high point for *LEGO Star Wars* on home video in the U.S. Things were about to take a turn for the worse.

¹¹⁴ See the chapter *Genndy Goes Micro* for more information.

¹¹⁵ See the chapter *A Cantina Full of Oddballs* for more information.

¹¹⁶ Yes, Ian, not Alden. *Solo: A Star Wars Story* was still seven years away. Also, yes, this was a spoiler for the special, since “Ian” wasn’t revealed to be “Han” until a twist late in the show.



LEGO Star Wars: The Padawan Menace
(Blu-ray, DVD, 2011)

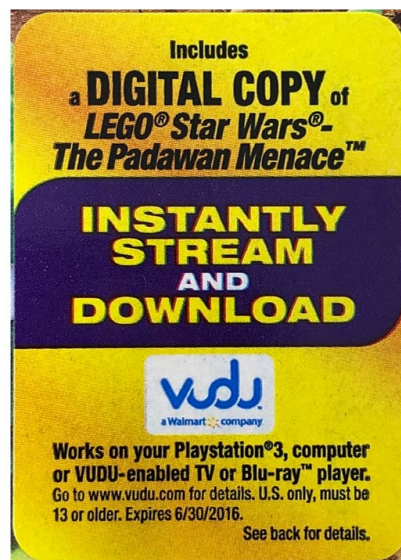


Young Han Solo (AKA "Ian")
exclusive minifigure

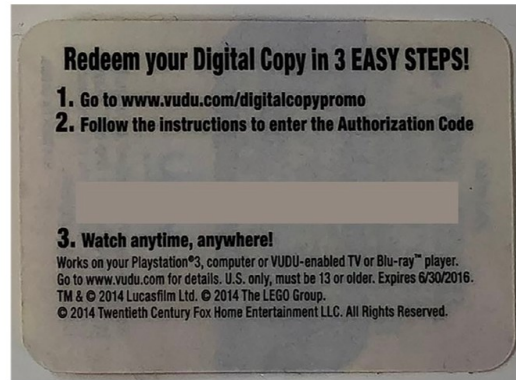
One should note that whereas this release came in 2011, it was reissued five years later in almost identical form via Walmart, but this time it included a sticker on the shrink wrap that indicated that it now included a digital copy through Walmart's Vudu streaming platform. Since the package and all of its contents were identical to the 2011 version, the actual digital code was not included inside the package but instead on the back of the sticker found on the shrink wrap.



LEGO Star Wars: The Padawan Menace
(Blu-ray, DVD, Digital, 2016)



Sticker noting the digital
copy with code on back



Code slip (i.e. reverse side of the sticker found on shrink wrap)

The Release Strikes Out (2013)

After the success of *The Padawan Menace*, Cartoon Network aired a second *LEGO Star Wars* special, *The Empire Strikes Out*, on Sept. 26, 2012. The special later found home video release on Mar. 26, 2013.

It was obvious from the start that this release was a step down from the heights achieved by *The Padawan Menace*. No longer a Blu-ray/DVD combo pack, *The Empire Strikes Out* was released on DVD only. The packaging was similar to that of *The Padawan Menace*, albeit in standard DVD case size this time. The outer cardboard cover included an exclusive LEGO minifigure of “Darth Vader with Medal,” based on the special.



LEGO Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Out (DVD, 2013)



Darth Vader with Medal exclusive minifigure

Like *The Padawan Menace*, the outer slipcover artwork matched that of the DVD case, this time with Luke Skywalker dueling Darth Vader as Han Solo and Leia Organa stand behind Luke and the duo of Darth Maul and

Darth Sidious stand behind Vader. That artwork of Luke vs. Vader (without the other characters) carried over to the disc label.

Unfortunately, this release contained no bonus content whatsoever, unless one counted a trailer for *LEGO Star Wars: The Padawan Menace* that automatically played before the DVD menu appeared. With no real extras to speak of and no high definition option, this seemed to be a low point for the specials. Surely a bare-bones DVD release with a minifigure would be the most basic these releases would get, right?

Meanwhile in the United Kingdom (2013)

We will see *The Padawan Menace* and *The Empire Strikes Out* form part of a three-disc DVD set in the U.S. in 2014, but the notion of collecting different *LEGO Star Wars* specials into a single package was something that came to the UK a year earlier.



LEGO Star Wars: 2 Fun Animated Adventures (UK DVD, 2013)

In 2013, the UK saw the release of *LEGO Star Wars: 2 Fun Animated Adventures*, which packaged the Region 2 DVD copies of *The Padawan Menace* and *The Empire Strikes Out* into a single DVD case. The case artwork used the *LEGO Star Wars* logo at the top, over a red bar that gave the 2

Fun Animated Adventures subtitle. Below that, the cover was split down the middle vertically. Each side featured a slightly altered version of the cover art from that special's standalone release with the title above. For *The Padawan Menace* this meant Yoda and Ian/Han but no other characters with them, while *The Empire Strikes Out* kept Luke, Vader, and Maul, but cut the other three characters.

The Partial Yoda Chronicles (2013)

Cartoon Network took its *LEGO Star Wars* specials to a new level by launching the next round of specials as a series, *The Yoda Chronicles*. Aired entirely (sort of) in 2013, the series began with "The Phantom Clone" on May 29, continued with "Menace of the Sith" on Sept. 4, then concluded (at least for Cartoon Network's phase of the series) with "Attack of the Jedi" on Nov. 27.

Three "mini-movies" (even shorter than episodes of Tartakovsky's *Clone Wars* episodes) for the series were released via YouTube around the same time. The first two ("Secret Plans are Revealed" and "Who Let the Clones Out") were released on Mar. 22, 2013, prior to the first full-length special, while the third ("The Dark Side Rises") was released about a month before "Attack of the Jedi" on Oct. 7, 2013. These mini-movies have yet to see physical home video release, probably owing to their continued availability for free on YouTube.

If *The Clone Wars 3-Pack* in Oct. 2013 was seen as a cash grab, it was the *LEGO Star Wars: The Yoda Chronicles* one month earlier on Sept. 11, 2013, that put home video collectors into the mindset of looking for products that seemed out of place or extraneous. One week after the airing of "Menace of the Sith" but still two months before the airing of "Attack of the Jedi," 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment inexplicably chose to release the first two episodes of *LEGO Star Wars: The Yoda Chronicles* on DVD as a Walmart exclusive.

Cover art featured Yoda battling Jek-14 with several other characters behind them to either side. The disc label used an almost identical image with just Yoda and Jek-14. Both noted the names of the only two episodes included below the series title, making it clear what was (and by omission what wasn't) included.

This was another bare-bones, specials-only, DVD-only release, with just a trailer for *LEGO Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Out* as added content. Even more distressing for LEGO collectors was that this was the first standalone *LEGO Star Wars* home video release in the U.S. that did not include an exclusive minifigure (or any minifigure for that matter). Moreover, it was not even the entire *The Yoda Chronicles* story from Cartoon Network because the last part had yet to even air.

It was as if LEGO Leia had turned to LEGO Han after the rather basic DVD release of *The Empire Strikes Out's* and said, "It could be worse."

Then *LEGO Star Wars: The Yoda Chronicles* arrived on DVD.

"It's worse."



LEGO Star Wars: The Yoda Chronicles (DVD, 2013)

Three-in-One, Goodbye Minifigs (2014)

To provide some added value (or insult to injury, depending on your perspective) on June 17, 2014, 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment released a Walmart exclusive three-pack of each of the previously released *LEGO Star Wars* DVDs: *The Padawan Menace*, *The Empire Strikes Out*, and *The Yoda Chronicles*.

Like *The Clone Wars 3-Pack* the year before, this was simply a repackaged reissue of the DVD discs included in the previous releases. By definition, that meant no Blu-ray from *The Padawan Menace*, just the DVD disc from that combo pack, packaged alongside the discs from the DVD-only releases of the other two products. However, since these were being packaged in a single DVD case, that meant that both minifigures (from the first two specials) were also absent from this package.

Case art was fairly straightforward and clear on what fans would be getting with this purchase. It included the *LEGO Star Wars* logo at the top, then three horizontal areas underneath that used portions of each release's original case artwork, along with each release's title. (In the case of *The Yoda Chronicles*, the titles of the two included episodes were listed again.)

On the one hand, it was a bargain way to acquire four *LEGO Star Wars* episodes on three DVDs, especially for those who were interested in having the shows for kids to watch, rather than to collect. For collectors already

stung by the backsliding of the product line since the strong *The Padawan Menace* combo pack, this was just another step backward by removing what they saw as the “best” parts of *The Padawan Menace* (the Blu-ray and the minifigure) and *The Empire Strikes Out* (the minifigure).

With *Star Wars* shows now to air on Disney XD and home video releases shifting to Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment, there was hope for change on the horizon.



LEGO *Star Wars* Walmart exclusive 3-Pack (DVD, 2014)

Creating an Unfilled Gap (2015)

In an unexpected move, Disney announced and launched a new *LEGO Star Wars* series on Disney XD that was not truly new at all. *LEGO Star Wars: The New Yoda Chronicles* actually picked up where Cartoon Network’s original episodes left off, creating a seven-episode saga that spanned two networks and about two years of airing. This was a bit of a surprise, given that many fans viewed the end of *The Clone Wars* and the upcoming *Rebels* premiere on Disney XD as battle lines drawn between Cartoon Network and Disney XD.

The New Yoda Chronicles aired four episodes in 2014: “Escape from the Jedi Temple” (May 4); “Race for the Holocrons” (June 15); “Raid on Coruscant” (Sept. 7); and “Clash of the Skywalkers” (Nov. 23). The mini-movies on YouTube also continued with eight new episodes, released during 2014 in a rather odd pattern: the first two (“Fall of the Republic” and “Into Exile”) on May 21; the next four (“Hunt for the Padawans,” “The Hunt for Luke Skywalker,” “The Galaxy’s Most Wanted,” and “An

Old Friend Returns”) on Aug. 6; and then the final pair (“Goodbye, Jek” and “A Farewell to Arm”) on Oct. 20.

Then on Sept. 15, 2015, *The New Yoda Chronicles* arrived on home video.

For fans wondering if Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment would correct the consistent, downward trajectory of 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment’s *LEGO Star Wars* releases, this release was not as strong as was hoped, though it often received more flak than it deserved.

The release was a single DVD that included all four episodes of *The New Yoda Chronicles*. (None of the mini-movies were included, as they continued to be available on YouTube for free, though it would’ve been a nice bonus feature.) The disc included a single bonus feature (an alternate ending for “Clash of the Skywalkers”) and trailers for three other Disney releases: *Tomorrowland*; *Aladdin: Diamond Edition*; and *Inside Out*. Once again, no minifigure was included, nor was a high definition option available. A Disney Movie Rewards points code was included on a slip that mostly mirrored the case art.



LEGO Star Wars: The New Yoda Chronicles (DVD, 2015)

Case artwork featured Luke Skywalker dueling Darth Vader in front of Yoda, while Jek-14 and Darth Sidious stand to either side in the background. Unfortunately, since this was a Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment release (and not *Rebels*), the disc label was the standard, plain, white and silver of most Disney series DVDs. These standardized labels

would be the norm for the remainder of the Disney era *LEGO Star Wars* releases.

On the plus side, all four episodes were present, and there was at least one small bonus feature for this release. On the other hand, fans (myself included) balked at the fact that this release was *The New Yoda Chronicles* (which amounted to episodes four through seven of the broader *Yoda Chronicles*), while the previous release had been the first two episodes of Cartoon Network's *The Yoda Chronicles* (and *The Yoda Chronicles* as a whole). That meant that the third episode of the overall series, "Attack of the Jedi," still did not have a physical home video release. We could now own episodes 1 – 2 and 4 – 7, but episode 3 was simply absent.

Expecting the Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment release of *The New Yoda Chronicles* to include "Attack of the Jedi" would have been to ignore the dividing lines between Cartoon Network and Disney XD or 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment and Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment. However, the lack of a follow-up for *The Yoda Chronicles* from the former cast a pall on the latter that was mostly unfair.

To date, however, the only way to own "Attack of the Jedi" in English for home viewing is through digital services like iTunes. At this point, fans no longer hold out much hope for a physical release of the episode or for a full set of all seven episodes in a single physical release.¹¹⁷

For a More Digital Age (2014, 2019)

In an odd bit of synergy that only digital media could provide, iTunes and the PlayStation Store released a pack of *LEGO Star Wars* episodes that spanned both Cartoon Network and Disney XD. Entitled *LEGO Star Wars: The Complete Brick Saga So Far*, it acted like a season pass to the *LEGO Star Wars* stories from *The Padawan Menace* through the end of *The New Yoda Chronicles*. No bonus features were included, but the inclusion of the missing "Attack of the Jedi" episode of *The Yoda Chronicles* made this worth a look at the time.

Eventually, when Disney+ launched on Nov. 12, 2019, only Disney's *LEGO Star Wars* content was included on the service (without any extras). *The Padawan Menace*, *The Empire Strikes Out*, and the original *Yoda Chronicles*

¹¹⁷ In theory, this should be possible, even if it is unlikely. The Walt Disney Company purchase of 20th Century Fox from 21st Century Fox in 2019 presumably brought the physical distribution rights to *The Yoda Chronicles* into the same hands as *The New Yoda Chronicles*.

(i.e. the first three episodes out of seven in the larger storyline) were nowhere to be found. On the plus side, the service offered an alternate version of “Clash of the Skywalkers,” entitled “Duel of the Skywalkers,” which integrated the alternate ending found on the physical release of *The New Yoda Chronicles* into the actual episode. None of the mini-movies for either incarnation of *The Yoda Chronicles* were included, even those produced during *The New Yoda Chronicles*.

Meanwhile in Germany (2015)

American fans seeking to fill the gap in their collections left by the poor handling of *LEGO Star Wars: The Yoda Chronicles* at home could seek solutions abroad, though the options available were far from ideal.

In Germany, the missing “Attack of the Jedi” episode could be acquired on its own. From Mar. 23 – Apr. 5, 2015, German retailer Galeria Kaufhof offered fans an interesting deal. Anyone purchasing at least 20 euros in *LEGO Star Wars* products through their website would receive a special promotional DVD that included a single episode of *LEGO Star Wars: The Yoda Chronicles*. Fortunately, that episode was “Attack of the Jedi” (or “Angriff der Jedi-Ritter”).

This was a region-free disc produced in Austria for the German-speaking market. Unfortunately for American collectors, the disc was PAL, meaning that it could not be played in the vast majority of American players (though many computers would play the disc). Even playing on a computer wouldn't be entirely fruitful, though, as the entire episode was dubbed into German with no option to view with the episode's original, English audio track.



LEGO Star Wars: The Yoda Chronicles: Attack of the Jedi (German DVD, 2015)

There were no menus at all on the disc, which featured a label with the series title (in English), episode title (in German), and various information over an image of LEGO Yoda and LEGO Dooku in lightsaber combat. The disc came in a cardboard jacket with a cover image similar to the disc label that added three images from the series to the bottom, one of which was partially covered by the film's rating under the German FSK (Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle der Filmwirtschaft) rating system. The back of the jacket swapped out the titles for legalese, removed the rating, and replaced the first of the three images (the one mostly covered by the rating on the front) with the product's barcode.

It was an imperfect item for American collectors, but when dealing with an episode that was entirely absent from the American market in physical form, we would take what we could get.

Meanwhile in Scandinavia... and Finland¹¹⁸ (2014 – 2015)

In Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Finland, fans had a much more logical experience with both *LEGO Star Wars: The Yoda Chronicles* series. Rather than releasing a *Yoda Chronicles* DVD before “Attack of the Jedi” could air, this market was more patient. The first DVD for the series came in 2014 and included all three of the episodes from Cartoon Network.

Cover art for this release was quite similar to that of the American two-episode release, and the disc label mirrored that art as well. The back cover detailed each episode's plot. The cover noted this as “Episode 1 – 3.”¹¹⁹ No bonus features were included, but fans could view the episodes with Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, or Finnish dubbing. Unfortunately for American importers, there was no option for the original English audio track. This was also a Region 2 PAL DVD, which would not play on standard American players.

A second DVD release came in 2015. As one would expect, this was *LEGO Star Wars: The New Yoda Chronicles*, but while that series title was on

¹¹⁸ Finland is on the Scandinavian Peninsula, but the three “Scandinavian” countries are usually considered to be Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, leaving out Finland. Some consider Finland part of the grouping, but that broader grouping often also includes Iceland and a couple of nearby island chains. “Back off, man, I’m a social studies teacher!”

¹¹⁹ Yes, “Episode,” not “Episodes.”

the cover (drawing a distinction from the original three episodes), the cover also noted that this disc included “Episode 4 – 7.” Thus, unlike in the U.S., not only was the entire seven-episode series available on physical media, packaging was designed to indicate that it was indeed a single storyline, not two entirely distinct series. This was likely due to both being distributed by Nordisk Film (part of Egmont) instead of either 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment, or both as in America.

This second volume featured cover and disc label art that was entirely different from the American release. The art showed C-3PO running away from Darth Vader’s AT-AT as the *Millennium Falcon* swooped in to save the day. Again, bonus features were not included, nor was the original English audio track, but fans could once more view with Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, or Finnish dubbing.



Left: *LEGO Star Wars: The Yoda Chronicles* (Scandinavian DVD, 2014)
Right: *LEGO Star Wars: The New Yoda Chronicles* (Scandinavian DVD, 2015)

For American fans, the German promotional DVD for “Attack of the

Jedi” was a better option for viewing, since it was region-free, but these other European releases provided a way to have a “complete series” set, even if it was incompatible with American DVD players. It’s just too bad that neither option offered the original, English audio at all.

“Collect All Three!” Means “Buy It at Least Three Times!” (2016)

A brand new *LEGO Star Wars* series launched on Disney XD in 2015, entitled *Droid Tales*. All five of the series’ episodes aired in 2015, including: “Exit from Endor” (July 6); “Crisis on Coruscant” (Aug. 24); “Mission to Mos Eisley” (Sept. 7); “Flight of the *Falcon*”¹²⁰ (Oct. 5); and “Gambit on Geonosis” (Nov. 2). The entire series, which followed C-3PO’s search for a kidnapped R2-D2 and recollection of the films and *Rebels* episode “Droids in Distress,” was later released on DVD (again without a high definition equivalent) on Mar. 1, 2016.

Cover art featured C-3PO and R2-D2 in the foreground with a veritable horde of other characters in the background to either side of the duo. This artwork was found on both the slipcover and DVD case. As with *The New Yoda Chronicles*, the DVD bore a standard, white and silver Disney label.

Unsurprisingly, this was another bare-bones release with all five episodes but no bonus features or minifigure. Thankfully, it did continue Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment’s pattern from *The New Yoda Chronicles* of waiting until all episodes were aired so that all could be collected without any episodes missing. On the disc were sneak peeks of the second season of *Rebels* and the Disney film *Zootopia*. The package also included a Disney Movie Rewards points code slip, which used artwork that was essentially just the two droids from the cover art with a purple, black, and white background that resembled the way the colors shifted in the background of the cover art, though not with quite the same hues.

¹²⁰ This is, of course, not to be confused with the Nintendo Game Boy Advance video game (2003), book/comic crossover series (2018 – 2019), or Marvel UK (and later *Classic Star Wars: Devilworlds* reprint series) story, all of the same name. (The latter had a “the” at the beginning but was otherwise the same as the others.)



LEGO Star Wars: Droid Tales (DVD, 2016)

This release began an odd new pattern in *LEGO Star Wars* home video products in that it *did* include a physical bonus, just not in the form of a minifigure. It was how this bonus was handled that drew ire. Each copy of *LEGO Star Wars: Droid Tales* included a small pack of three exclusive Topps trading cards found only in this release. Had they stopped there, that would have been a nifty little pack-in that would perhaps have best been described as “better than nothing.” However, there were actually *nine* cards to collect, divided into packs of three, and there was no way of knowing which cards were included in a given package without opening it. In other words, someone wanting an entire nine-card set of these exclusive trading cards would have to buy *Droid Tales* on DVD *at least* three times, probably more, in order to actually get all three card packs, with no guarantee of ever actually acquiring a full set without seeking out cards on the secondary market. I suppose we can at least be thankful that which three were bundled together was predetermined, so no pack of three overlapped with the cards in a different pack of three. Only which pack was included was randomized, not the cards per pack. One pack included cards entitled “Darth Vader,” “Rebels,” and “Stormtroopers.” Another included “C-3PO and R2-D2,” “Luke Skywalker,” and “Emperor Palpatine.” The remaining pack included

“Darth Maul,” “Anakin Skywalker,” and “Jedi.”
What idiot thought this was a good idea?



Sticker indicating the free trading card “set” inside (top left)
and all three “sets” of three cards¹²¹

For a More Digital Age (2015, 2019)

All of *Droid Tales* saw release via digital platforms like iTunes and the PlayStation Store, but no extra bonus features were included.

The series (without any extras) became available through Disney+ at launch on Nov. 12, 2019.

The Resistance Rises... Then Vanishes (2016)

Two weeks before *Droid Tales* landed on DVD, another *LEGO Star*

¹²¹ “Collect all three sets? We seem to be made to suffer. It’s our lot in life.” For the record, I bought one “set” on eBay by itself, along with one copy of the DVD at the time of release, then *three* later via eBay in hopes of being lucky enough to finish the set. It worked. With that kind of luck, I should’ve played sabacc instead.

Wars series took flight, but not as full-length episodes this time. A series of five short films, running about 5 – 10 min. each, entitled *The Resistance Rises*, premiered with “Poe to the Rescue” on Disney XD on Feb. 15, 2016. After a couple of months off, this new micro-series (if Tartakovsky fans will forgive the appropriation of their nomenclature) returned on Apr. 13 with “The Trouble with Rathtars.” The series then continued on a weekly basis, releasing three more episodes, concluding on May 4 (as in “May the Fourth be with you!”).

The Resistance Rises wasn't so much about the rise of the Resistance as a series of random tie-ins to *The Force Awakens*. “Poe to the Rescue” detailed Poe Dameron's rescue of Admiral Gial Ackbar, as hinted at in the comic *C-3PO: The Phantom Limb*.

The second episode, “The Trouble with Rathtars,” presented a comedic take on some of the problems Han and Chewbacca encountered while transporting rathtars for King Prana.

“Hunting for Han,” the third episode, featured Bala-Tik of the Guavian Death Gang and Tasu Leech of Kanjiklub hunting Han at Maz Kanata's castle. There, a mysterious stranger tries to point them in the wrong direction, unwittingly pointing them in the right direction by trying to use the backwater planet Jakku as his red herring. The “helpful” rogue in question is none other than Lando Calrissian, who wouldn't reappear in live action until *The Rise of Skywalker*.

The fourth episode, “Rey Strikes Back,” featured a dust-up between Rey and some of Unkar Plutt's goons, while the final episode, “Attack of the Conscience,” gave us a LEGO version of what Finn was up to in the lead-up to the assault on Jakku in the opening of TFA (something covered in canon through sources like *Before the Awakening* in rather different fashion).

When watched consecutively, the five episodes only amounted to approximately one episode of a half-hour cartoon like *The Clone Wars* or *Rebels*, so it was no surprise that this LEGO micro-series did not receive a home video release. To date, it remains available only digitally.

Interestingly, while it made no splash at all in the home video market, it did affect the video *game* industry, as several scenes from the episodes were used as cutscenes in the *LEGO Star Wars: The Force Awakens* video game (released on June 28, 2016, nearly two months after the original episodes finished airing on Disney XD).

For a More Digital Age (2019)

All five episodes of *LEGO Star Wars: Resistance Rises* were released via digital outlets shortly after airing without any bonus features.

The series was also included as part of Disney+ at launch on Nov. 12, 2019. No extras were included there either.

New Series, New Direction, New Hope (2016)

After *The Yoda Chronicles* (original and *New*) and *Droid Tales*, the idea that *LEGO Star Wars* stories could work as a series was no longer in doubt. The questions then became just how long a series could be sustained by a *LEGO Star Wars* format, and how would the approach to such a series need to change from the way the property had been handled in the past?

The result of these efforts was *LEGO Star Wars: The Freemaker Adventures*, a somewhat less slapstick-oriented, serious-when-necessary, ongoing series that focused on the adventures of the three Freemaker siblings (Rowan, Kordi, and Zander) and their droid R0-GR. The series' first season ran for thirteen episodes June 20 – Aug. 29, 2016.

On Dec. 6, 2016, this refreshingly different *LEGO Star Wars* saga arrived at home via Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment. After so many missed opportunities and letdowns from *LEGO Star Wars* releases since *The Empire Strikes Out*, one could be forgiven for expecting the worst. Instead, *The Freemaker Adventures* was treated more akin to an ongoing series like *Rebels* than its *LEGO Star Wars* predecessors (at least for now).



LEGO Star Wars: The Freemaker Adventures: Complete Season One (Blu-ray, 2016)



LEGO Star Wars: The Freemaker Adventures: Complete Season One (DVD, 2016)

LEGO Star Wars: The Freemaker Adventures: Complete Season One was released on Blu-ray and DVD (in separate releases, not a combo pack this time). Both releases included two discs and a code slip for Disney Movie Rewards points, all contained in either a standard, blue Blu-ray case or a clear DVD case, which then fit inside a larger cardboard package that included an exclusive set of six magnets, featuring the five main characters (the Freemakers, R0-GR, and the villainous Naare) and the Freemakers' ship, the *StarScavenger*. Both packages included two bonus features, albeit short ones: *Freemaker Salvage and Repair* (an in-universe advertisement for their business) and *Meet the Freemaker Family* (a brief look at the characters and the voice actors portraying them).

For both releases, case and slipcover artwork was nearly identical, this time in a style reminiscent of a movie poster. For the outer cover, the three Freemakers appeared in the center of the image with the *StarScavenger* in the foreground below them (just above the series' logo), while R0-RR stood just behind and to the viewer's left of the kids. Darth Vader and Emperor Palpatine loomed overhead in the background with a pair of TIE fighters to the right of Palpatine. A planet appeared in the bottom right corner, while the Wheel space station appeared in the bottom left corner. The area between R0-GR and the Wheel below was dominated by a small window through which a sample of the magnets could be seen. For the interior case, which did not need such a window, the locations of the R0-GR and the Wheel were swapped, making the interior case art a slight variant on the outer cover art. (This interior case art was mirrored on the code slip.)

Magnet set included in both Blu-ray and DVD packages



For disc labels, the standard Disney format was used again. For DVD, this meant the usual white and silver labels, while Blu-ray used a blue and silver variant of similar design.

After so many disappointing *LEGO Star Wars* releases, this was a new hope for the product line. High definition had returned as an option, even if not as a combo pack with DVD, and pack-ins were back (as they were for *Droid Tales*) without the need for multiple purchases to acquire a set of the items (quite *unlike* the *Droid Tales* release). If only the package had included a minifigure instead of a set of magnets, this would have been a truly stellar release. As it stands, it was a very strong release, compared to the other *LEGO Star Wars* packages since 2013.¹²²

For a More Digital Age (2016, 2019)

All of the first season of *The Freemaker Adventures* saw release via digital

¹²² Then again, as Dennis Miller once said, that might equate to being “valedictorian of summer school.” The competition wasn’t exactly fierce for the title.

platforms like iTunes, but no extra bonus features were included. Oddly, it was referred to as *The Freemaker Adventures, Vol. 1* instead of *Season 1*, but that was somewhat in keeping with how some other Disney series, such as *Phineas and Ferb*, had their releases labeled, so it was not entirely unprecedented.

This season was included as part of Disney+ at launch on Nov. 12, 2019. No extras were included.

One final note is worth adding on *LEGO Star Wars: The Freemaker Adventures: Complete Season One*. Fans had been building up Disney Movie Rewards points for a while, and one option when redeeming those points was to receive certain home video items. These were usually just standard retail copies (with or without slipcovers, depending on when ordered), so there has been no need to mention them previously. However, fans who redeemed to receive the first season of *The Freemaker Adventures* on Blu-ray were disappointed to find that what they received was just the Blu-ray discs in the standard Blu-ray case without the outer packaging or the magnets.¹²³

New Season, New Disappointment, Hope Dies¹²⁴ (2018)

The second season of *LEGO Star Wars: The Freemaker Adventures* aired June 17 – Aug. 16, 2017. Prior to its official premiere, five video shorts featuring the characters were released online to celebrate that year's "*Star Wars* Day" (May 4, as in "May the Fourth be with you!"). Those five shorts were then merged to become the second season's premiere episode, "A New Home." This second (and, unbeknownst to us at the time, final) season of Rowan, Zander, Kordi, and R0-GR's hijinks arrived on home video on Mar. 13, 2018.

Just like *The Padawan Menace* had given standalone *LEGO Star Wars* specials a strong start on home video but was then followed by the disappointing release of *The Empire Strikes Out*, this second season release followed the first season's availability on both Blu-ray and DVD with disappointment. *LEGO Star Wars: The Freemaker Adventures: Complete Season*

¹²³ That's kind of like earning a trophy shaped like a large goblet... that's full of spoiled milk. Or blue milk, I guess.

¹²⁴ I know, that's a bit overdramatic, but it's a reference to an actual story arc in Marvel's *Star Wars* comic series, so I stand by it. For many of us, hope for better *LEGO Star Wars* releases did die with this one.

Two was available only on DVD. Once again, the second *LEGO Star Wars* release in a series had ditched high definition entirely.



LEGO Star Wars: The Freemaker Adventures: Complete Season Two (DVD, 2018)

To be fair, this was not entirely unexpected. As discussed back when we looked at *Resistance*¹²⁵, it was common practice at this time for Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment to either release a season of a television series only on DVD or not at all. The first season coming on Blu-ray and DVD (and, for that matter, *Rebels* and the sixth season of *The Clone Wars* doing so) was a break with standard Disney practice at the time that simply did not last. Even so, the precedent set by the first season of the Freemakers' exploits led to great disappointment with this final season's treatment in 2018.

The season's 13 episodes were carried on two DVDs with Disney's standard, white and silver labels, similar to the first season. Cover art was identical this time between slipcover and case, featuring the Freemakers and R0-GR in the middle, the *Arrowhead* below them in the foreground, and the

¹²⁵ See the chapter *A Home Video Kazztastrophe*.

trio of Darth Vader, Emperor Palpatine, and droid M-OC looming behind them, beneath various starfighters. This time, rather than a minifigure (far too much to ask for) or magnets (which were a bit strange anyway), the season set included a pack-in Darth Vader pin on a small protective card.



Darth Vader pin (on card)

To date, this was the last *LEGO Star Wars* home video release on the American market, a disappointing end to a disappointing product line with only a few standout releases.

Changes for Better and/or Worse:

LEGO Star Wars: The Freemaker Adventures: A New Home (2017)

For the premiere of *The Freemaker Adventures*' second season, five shorts that were released on the *LEGO Star Wars* website on May 4, 2017, were merged into a single episode, entitled "A New Home," which aired on June 17, 2017. The shorts included: "Home One;" "Thrown Into Battle;" "Rowan's Secret Adventure;" "Zander Freemaker, Superstar Pilot Guy!;" and "Beware the Gamorrean Flu!"

As one might expect, there were no changes to the story content of any of the episodes. Instead, each episode's opening logo/fanfare and end credits were removed in favor of a slightly longer, more dramatic opening logo/fanfare at the beginning of the merged episode and combined credits at the end.

For a More Digital Age (2017, 2019)

Just like the first season, the second (final) season arrived on digital platforms shortly after airing, but no bonus features were included. This season was referred to as *The Freemaker Adventures, Vol. 2* instead of *Season 2*, continuing that odd Disney naming convention. The shorts were *not* part of the season pass or otherwise available for purchase digitally, since they were already available online for free and available in combined form as "A New Home." (Including the shorts would have been somewhat redundant.)

This season and its shorts were all included as part of Disney+ at launch

on Nov. 12, 2019. (Yes, including the shorts was somewhat redundant.¹²⁶) No extras were included.

Being “All-Stars” Apparently Can’t Justify a Physical Release (2018)

LEGO Star Wars: The Freemaker Adventures: Complete Season Two was the last *LEGO Star Wars* home video release to date, but that didn’t mean that *LEGO Star Wars* content had ceased being produced. Another series launched in late 2018: *LEGO Star Wars: All-Stars*.

All-Stars featured what were essentially self-contained stories, featuring prominent *Star Wars* characters (including the Freemakers). It premiered with a series of eight shorts. The first five were released daily Oct. 29 – Nov. 2, 2018. The last three were launched on Nov. 10, 2018, the same day that all eight shorts were merged into a season premiere (“From Trenches to Wrenches: The Roger Story”) that aired on Disney XD, similar to how *The Freemaker Adventures* shorts had been merged into “A New Home” for its second season premiere. That episode began a weekly series that ran for just five episodes (the same number of episodes as *Droid Tales*) to end on Dec. 8, 2018.

The four episodes that weren’t made up of the series’ shorts were similar in style to many of the episodes of the second season of *Ewoks* back in 1986. Each half-hour episode (including commercials) was split into two separate stories. The Nov. 17 episode included “The Chase with Han” and “Escape with Chewbacca.” The Nov. 24 episode included “Dealing with Lando” and “Han and Chewie Strike Back.” The Dec. 1 episode included “Scouting for Leia” and “A Mission with Maz.” The final episode, aired on Dec. 8, included “Rolling with BB-8” and “Resistance on the Run.”

To date, this series has never seen physical home video release.

Changes for Better and/or Worse:

***LEGO Star Wars: All-Stars: From Trenches to Wrenches* (2018)**

The process for merging the eight *All-Stars* shorts into “From Trenches to Wrenches: The Roger Story” followed the same pattern as the merging of shorts from *The Freemaker Adventures*. There were no changes to the story content of any of the episodes. Instead, each episode’s opening logo/fanfare and end credits were removed in favor of a slightly longer, more dramatic opening logo/fanfare at the beginning of the merged

¹²⁶ Is there a distorted echo in here?

episode and combined credits at the end.

For a More Digital Age (2018 – 2019)

All five regular episodes (but none of the shorts that were already available online for free) were available for purchase shortly after airing via outlets like iTunes. (Of course, having the shorts would have just been redundant with the first episode, so this was a non-issue for all but the most hardcore digital collectors.) No bonus features were included.

All five episodes of *LEGO Star Wars: All-Stars* and its eight shorts were included as part of Disney+ at launch on Nov. 12, 2019. Yes, this made the Disney+ lineup complete, albeit with some redundancy. No extras were included.

A New Holiday Special (2020)

22 years after the television premiere of *The Star Wars Holiday Special* on CBS, a brand new holiday special launched on Disney+ on Nov. 17, 2020. This was the *LEGO Star Wars Holiday Special*, a tale that was most notable at the time as the first real attempt at telling a *Star Wars* story set after *The Rise of Skywalker*, albeit non-canon. The story sees Rey, frustrated with her attempts to train Finn to be a Jedi, head for Kordoku, where she acquires a crystal that lets her (and BB-8) create and travel through time portals to observe other Jedi during training. Unfortunately, it all goes awry, leading to quite a few chronology-bending era crossovers and a battle for the fate of all of creation.

While typical *LEGO Star Wars* fare, sparing it from anyone assuming it to be canonical, the special was entertaining enough for what it was. Unfortunately, it has thus far shared the fate of all original Disney+ *Star Wars* productions by not having a physical home video (or purchasable digital) release at all yet.

For a More Digital Age (2020)

The special premiered on Disney+ on Nov. 17, 2020. It is, at least so far, a Disney+ exclusive. It included a single extra: a trailer for the special.

Another Return to Vader's Castle (2021)

Star Wars “kiddie” fare sometimes veered off into the territory of “scary” tales for children. One early attempt to capture the audience of R.L. Stine’s young reader book series *Goosebumps* (which was immensely popular during its original 1992 – 1997 run) had been a 12-book *Star Wars* series called *Galaxy of Fear* (1997 – 1998) by author John Whitman. In more recent

years, that same sort of “maybe scary for kids but often cringe-worthy and hokey for adults” storytelling has become the focus of several comics released by IDW as spinoffs of their *Star Wars Adventures* comics that were aimed at a younger audience than Marvel’s more mainstream *Star Wars* series. With the success of IDW’s *Tales from Vader’s Castle* (2018 – 2019), sequels followed, including: *Return to Vader’s Castle* (2019); the one-shot *Shadow of Vader’s Castle* (2020); and *Ghosts of Vader’s Castle* (2021).

A similar thematic approach was used for the second *LEGO Star Wars* special to premiere on Disney+. On Oct. 1, 2021, the streaming service launched *LEGO Star Wars: Terrifying Tales*, a sort of *Star Wars* Halloween special. In the story, notably set after TROS as the *LEGO Star Wars Holiday Special* (and no canonical materials thus far) had been, Poe Dameron and BB-8 find themselves stuck on Mustafar, where Graballa the Hutt is renovating Darth Vader’s castle into a vacation resort. Along the way, they run afoul of Vaneé, Vader’s servant, play out a prophecy involving a Sith Holocron, and share several *Star Wars* horror stories, including “The Lost Boy,” “The Dueling Monstrosities,” and “The Wookiee’s Paw.” The former followed Ben Solo’s fall to the Dark Side and development into Kylo Ren (in a way very different from the canonical version found in the *Kylo Ren* comic mini-series). The second detailed an alternate return of Maul as he tries to regain his former master’s favor. The latter was essentially a version of the classic *The Monkey’s Paw* tale, adapted for a galaxy far, far away.

As one should expect by now, this special has not seen physical release, though in this case, it has been such a short time since its premiere that even if we could expect one, it likely wouldn’t happen for a while yet regardless.

For a More Digital Age (2021)

The special premiered on Disney+ on Oct. 1, 2021. It is, at least so far, a Disney+ exclusive. It included a single extra: a trailer for the special.

Conclusion: Missed Opportunities Abound

I am not alone in being constantly blown away by the sheer volume of missed opportunities and poor decisions that have plagued *LEGO Star Wars* home video releases. At first, the product line provided a release that could have set new standards for what to expect of *LEGO Star Wars* (and indeed all *Star Wars*) releases. Then it was as if every release made an intentional step backward, while tripping over its own feet. Even after hope dawned again, thanks to *The Freemaker Adventures: Complete Season One*, it only set fans up for disappointment with the next season set. The *Brick Saga*, as iTunes called it in 2014, was a scattered, fluctuating mess on home video.

Will we ever see more *LEGO Star Wars* releases on home video? It is

hard to say. What is certain, however, is that if and when that happens, we should not expect much. It will be far less disappointing that way.

17 BEHIND THE CURTAIN

(1979 – 2020)

As we have seen, the American *Star Wars* home video library includes numerous (perhaps a ridiculous amount of) releases, reissues, upgrades, and options for viewing the saga’s fictional tales, whether from the Story Group’s current canon, the previous Legends continuity, or even those of the bizarre *LEGO Star Wars* alternate universe(s).

Now let’s move much closer to home.

None of these films and television programs would have been possible if not for the vast array of talented people working behind-the-scenes to bring them to life. From George Lucas to J.J. Abrams to Dave Filoni and so many others, the stories surrounding the making of *Star Wars* productions have also become the stuff of fantastic, surprising tales. In this penultimate product-focused chapter, we dive into the behind-the-scenes specials and other similar releases that shed light on what Mark Hamill once called “the saga *behind* the saga.”¹²⁷

The Very First *Star Wars* VHS and Beta Releases (1979)

We often give credit to *A New Hope*’s 1982 rental or retail release as being the first *Star Wars* release on VHS or Beta. While this is true from the standpoint of full versions of *Star Wars* films, ANH was *not* the first *Star Wars* production to ever see release on VHS or Beta. That honor goes to

¹²⁷ Bonus points if you recognized this quote as being from the opening of *From Star Wars to Jedi: The Making of a Saga*.

the behind-the-scenes special *The Making of Star Wars as Told by C-3PO and R2-D2*, which originally aired on ABC on Sept. 16, 1977.

This special received home video release on both VHS and Beta in 1979 via Magnetic Video, which was purchased by 20th Century Fox in 1979 and reorganized in 1982 into the more familiar 20th Century-Fox Video, which then merged with CBS Video Enterprises that same year.

This was a bare-bones release of the special with original narrator William Conrad (of *Cannon* fame). The cover art was rather garish, featuring a large black area at the bottom with a window to see the cassette inside, a large white area at the top for pink text and a blue logo, the droids dominating the center area of the cover, and two pink(ish) boxes behind the droids to show a pink-hued shot of the “Big Three” on the right and a standard image of Vader (against a pink background) on the left.

The special was reissued in 1980 (still under Magnetic Video), this time including a trailer for *The Empire Strikes Back* after the special and a sticker on the front of the case noting that it included the trailer.¹²⁸ Unlike in the case of retail *Star Wars* VHS and Beta products that came later, these releases differed in size (similar to the 1982 rental versions) so that cases were form-fitting to their respective media, making Beta copies, even in their packaging, significantly smaller than VHS copies.



The Making of Star Wars as Told by C-3PO and R2-D2 (1979) – VHS (left) and Beta (right)



The Making of Star Wars as Told by C-3PO and R2-D2 (1980) – VHS (left) and Beta (right)

¹²⁸ In an odd twist, this trailer was *not* on the 2004 *Original Trilogy* DVD set’s bonus disc with most others. It was, however, included in *The Definitive Collection* in 1993. See the chapter *Rise of DVD, Demise of VHS* for the former or *The Original... One Last Time* for the latter, both of which are found in *Volume I*.

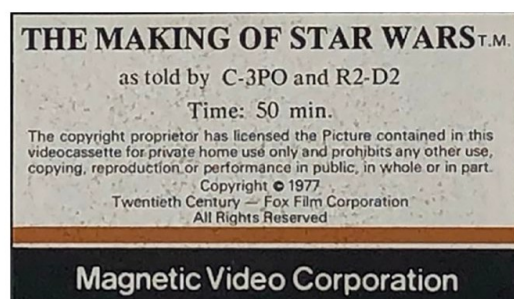
A Saga on Home Video: A Fan's Guide to U.S. *Star Wars* Home Video Releases



Side label comparison:
1979 (top) vs. 1980 (bottom)



Back product listing comparison:
1979 (left) vs. 1980 (right)



VHS label comparison: 1979 (left) vs. 1980 (right)

These two releases could be also distinguished by subtle physical differences. The back of each case bore its respective copyright date (with the copyright date of the special itself, 1977, on the front of both). Above that copyright date was a listing of other programs offered by Magnetic Video, which also slightly differed. In 1979, items on the list were separated by dots, and the text above them was left-aligned. For the 1980 release, items were separated by slashes, while the text above was centered. Also, while the 1979 cassette label was white over stripes of gold and black with just “Magnetic Video Corporation” at the bottom, the 1980 label was white with “Magnetic Video, a Twentieth Century-Fox Company” between a pair of red stripes at the bottom.

The Magnetic Video logo also changed between 1979 and 1980. While the logos on the cases were the older version each time, the long label on the side of each cassette bore the Magnetic Video logo of its era, providing another way to distinguish the two cassettes.

Meanwhile in the United Kingdom (1979)

While we will not look at *every* iteration of *The Making of Star Wars as Told by C-3PO and R2-D2* from the UK, it is useful to briefly note here that the 1979 cover art in the UK for VHS and Beta differed substantially from the American artwork, sometimes leading to confusion. The UK art was less “busy” than the American cover, instead simply showing the two droids on the set used for the special. As in the U.S., the initial releases put both cassette types into cases that matched that format’s size, rather than simply using VHS cases for both.

It is also notable that the latter portion of the title, *as Told by C-3PO and R2-D2*, was missing from the covers and labels in the UK, which simply called the special by the shortened name it would bear for the 1995 U.S. mail-away copy: *The Making of Star Wars*.



The Making of Star Wars (1979) – UK VHS (top) and UK Beta (bottom)

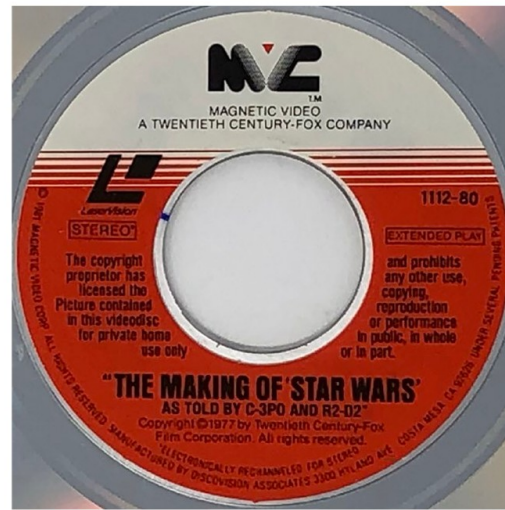
A Blitz of Double-Features (1981 – 1987)

On Sept. 22, 1980, CBS aired *SP FX: The Empire Strikes Back*, a behind-

the-scenes look at TESB hosted by Mark Hamill. In 1981, Magnetic Video released a double-feature LaserDisc that included both *The Making of Star Wars as Told by C-3PO and R2-D2* and *SP FX: The Empire Strikes Back*. Cover art for this double-feature in its various forms would be easily recognizable in years to come: a blue starfield background with the titles of both specials in white and red. This 1981 release was recognizable by having that standard cover art inside a gray, circular border with the 20th Century Fox logo in the upper left and the latest Magnetic Video Corporation logo on the bottom right. The disc label was the standard MVC style at the time: a white area at the top with the company logo and name with a large red-orange area beneath with the title, various logos, and blocks of legalese.



*The Making of Star Wars as Told by C-3PO
and R2-D2/SP FX: The Empire Strikes
Back (LaserDisc, 1981)*

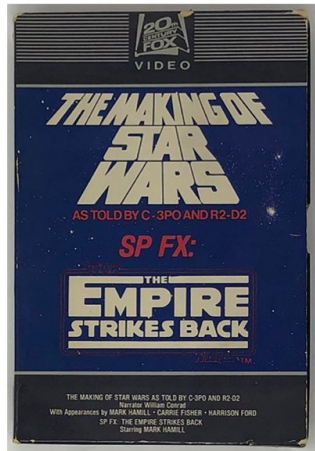


Disc label

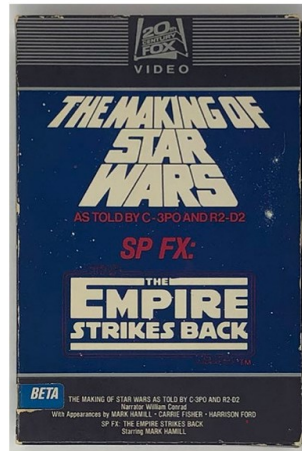
This double-feature was released again in 1982 on VHS, Beta, CED, and LaserDisc under 20th Century-Fox Video. The packaging on this release, which used the standard double-feature artwork, was similar to that of the 1982 ANH release¹²⁹ with the 20th Century-Fox Video logo in the center of a bar at the top of the package (and the circular border removed from the LaserDisc packaging). Cassette and disc labels also resembled their 1982 ANH counterparts. These VHS and Beta releases were available first in a 20th Century-Fox Video drawer case in 1982, then the VHS was reissued in 1987 as a CBS/Fox Video release in a standard, bottom-loading case, using the same artwork (without a bar on the top in favor of a CBS/Fox Video

¹²⁹ See the chapter *The Great Format War* in *Volume I*.

logo in the upper right corner) and the updated black and white label style of its era.



The Making of Star Wars as Told by C-3PO and R2-D2/SP FX: The Empire Strikes Back (VHS, 1982)



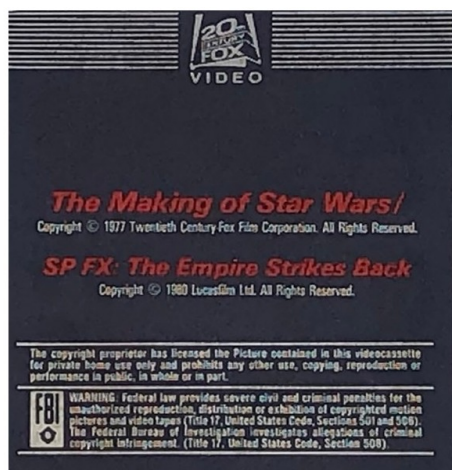
The Making of Star Wars as Told by C-3PO and R2-D2/SP FX: The Empire Strikes Back (Beta, 1982)



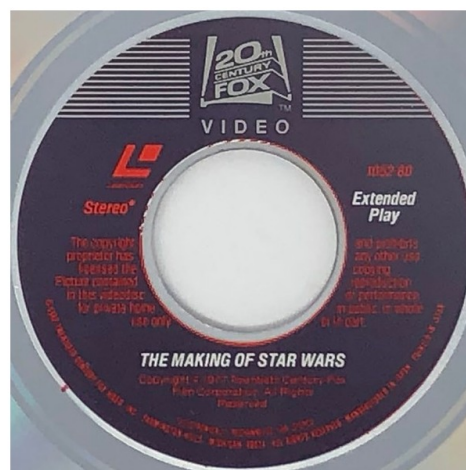
The Making of Star Wars as Told by C-3PO and R2-D2/SP FX: The Empire Strikes Back (CED, 1982)



The Making of Star Wars as Told by C-3PO and R2-D2/SP FX: The Empire Strikes Back (LaserDisc, 1982)



Label example: 1982 Beta



Disc label (1982)



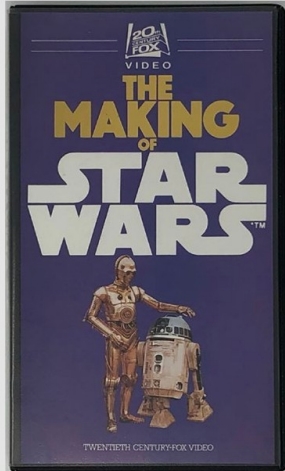
The Making of Star Wars as Told by C-3PO and R2-D2/SP FX: The Empire Strikes Back (VHS, 1987)



Label (1987)

Meanwhile in the United Kingdom (1982 – 1984)

Whereas the U.S. market primarily yielded double-feature releases for *The Making of Star Wars as Told by C-3PO and R2-D2* and *SP FX: The Empire Strikes Back* in 1982, the United Kingdom instead saw a reissue of just the former (again with the shortened *The Making of Star Wars* title) on VHS, Beta, and Video 2000. Both bore plain text labels and came in clamshell cases with the 20th Century-Fox Video logo, the special's title, and the two droids on the cover against a stark, purple background.



The Making of Star Wars (UK VHS/Beta/Video 2000, 1982)

Two years later (and thus three years after its initial American home video release as part of the double-feature LaserDisc via Magnetic Video), *SP FX: The Empire Strikes Back* also saw a release in the UK, but unlike in the United States, this was a release of just that special, not paired with its predecessor. These could be found on VHS and Beta (and possibly Video 2000, though I've not been able to confirm that), primarily for rental. The clamshell case's cover art featured an odd (to my eyes at least) Darth Vader against a red background with the *SP FX* logo and the TESB logo (sort of separately) placed over a bizarre, entirely black body for Vader.



SP FX: The Empire Strikes Back (UK VHS, 1984)¹³⁰

¹³⁰ Please pardon the sticker residue marring the bottom left of the artwork. There's only so much that Goo Gone can do with sticker residue that's decades old.

Due to how tough it is to find a quality copy of this release on the secondary market, this particular item has become one of the most sought-after for UK collectors, alongside the initial LaserDisc releases of each film and any *Star Wars* material on Video 2000 or Video8.

Meanwhile in Japan (1984)

The Japanese market was home to five *Star Wars* releases on VHD (Video High Density discs). We have finally reached the last of these, though it was far from the last chronologically. The double-feature of *The Making of Star Wars as Told by C-3PO and R2-D2* and *SP FX: The Empire Strikes Back* came to VHD in 1984.



The Making of Star Wars as Told by C-3PO and R2-D2/SP FX: The Empire Strikes Back (Japanese VHD, 1982) – slipcover (left), insert with caddy (right)

In keeping with its time (around the time of the ANH and TESB VHD releases in 1983 – 1984¹³¹), this was a typical, white caddy with a garish orange label. Given the length of the content, this release, like *Caravan of Courage* in 1987, was a single disc in a single caddy, held within a slipcover, which used the same artwork as the American double-feature releases.

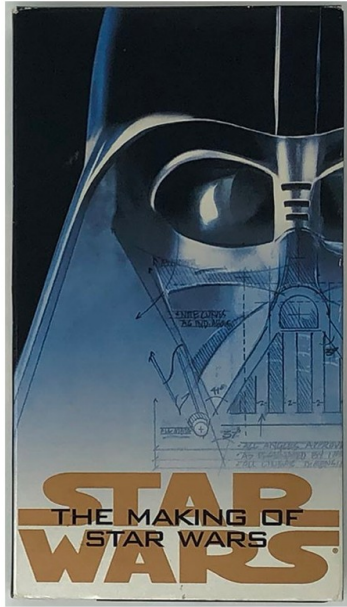
Eat Cereal, Get a Video (1995)

Perhaps the strangest means of acquiring *The Making of Star Wars as Told by C-3PO and R2-D2* was also the one that would provide an unusual variant

¹³¹ See the chapter *The Great Format War* in *Volume I*.

that replaced original narrator William Conrad with “king of the trailer voice” Don LaFontaine.

This version was only available on VHS through a mail-away offer with certain Kellogg’s cereals (e.g. Corn Pops) in 1995. Given its release timing, it should be no surprise that this Fox Video release bore a resemblance to the *THX Remastered Edition* VHS packaging, this time with Vader half-formed, half-sketched on the front of the VHS case.¹³² The cassette label also matched the style of the 1995 film VHS releases.



The Making of Star Wars
(VHS, 1995)



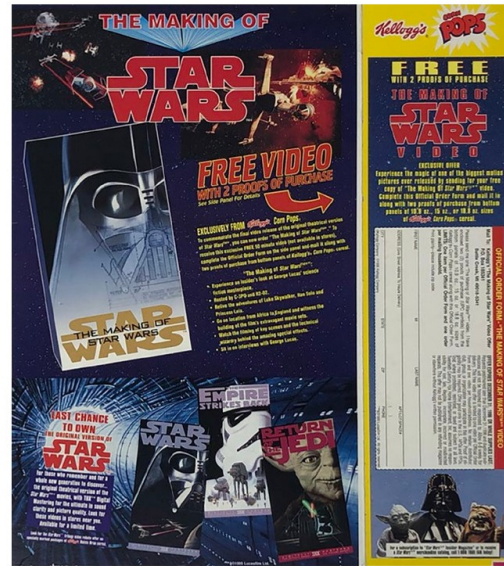
Label

To date, this is the only version of the special to include the LaFontaine voiceover instead of Conrad. It was also the only American release of the special that shortened the title to *The Making of Star Wars*, leaving off *as Told by C-3PO and R2-D2*, similar to the UK releases.

¹³² A similar front cover design scheme would reappear for the extra VHS cassette in the 1997 *Special Edition Trilogy: Limited Edition Collector's Set* two years later. See the chapter *See It Again... For the First Time* in *Volume I*.



Corn Pops cereal box with offer



Back and side (order form) panels



Bottom cereal box panel section noting offer

Enter: Playhouse Video (1985 – 1986)

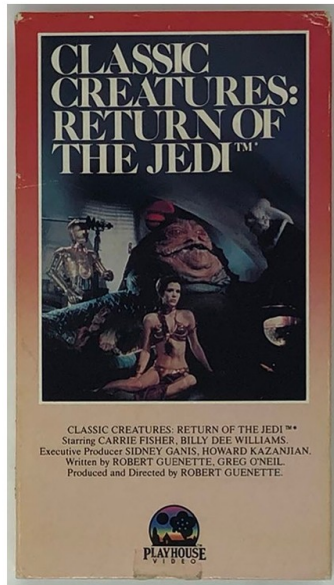
The Making of Star Wars as Told by C-3PO and R2-D2 and *SP FX: The Empire Strikes Back* are often thought of as two parts of a trilogy of behind-the-scenes specials, one for each *Original Trilogy* film. The third member of this triad was *Classic Creatures: Return of the Jedi*, hosted by Carrie Fisher and Billy Dee Williams. Originally aired on CBS on Nov. 21, 1983, this was another look inside the saga's production.

Classic Creatures: Return of the Jedi received a fairly modest treatment in the United States, earning itself what appears to only have been a single, bare-bones, VHS and Beta release stateside. This release came through Playhouse Video (a short-lived division of CBS/Fox Video designated for programs intended for children and families) in 1985.

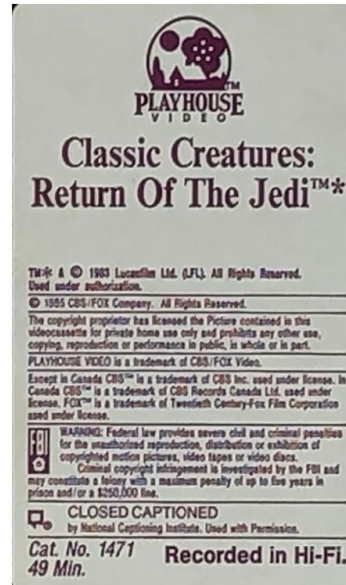
Cover art featured a classic image of Jabba on his dais with Leia Organa (in slave attire) and Salacious B. Crumb, while C-3PO and Bib Fortuna stand behind and next to Jabba, respectively. The picture continued upward to the ceiling to allow the rather long, large title of the program to be inserted on top of the photo. This whole image (i.e. the photo with the title) was then used for the top two-thirds (or so) of the case, framed in an orange, gradient background. Beneath the image, cast/crew information could be found, above a Playhouse Video logo.

The cassette label was more subdued with just a Playhouse Video logo, the special's title, and a plethora of legalese and other information. These

were typically found with the labels printed in a dull, almost magenta ink.

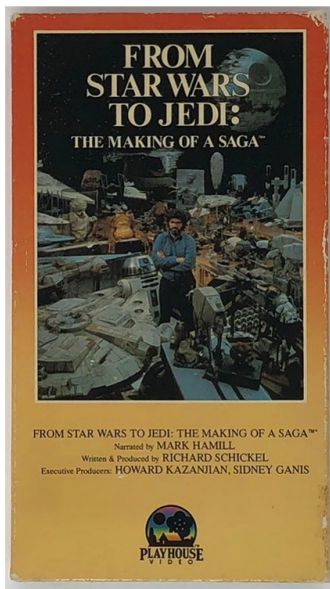


Classic Creatures: Return of the Jedi
(VHS, 1985)



Label

The behind-the-scenes special of 1983 that *did* manage to see several releases over the years and gain greater notoriety was *From Star Wars to Jedi: The Making of a Saga*, which aired Dec. 3, 1983, on PBS. Like *Classic Creatures: Return of the Jedi*, this special saw initial release from Playhouse Video. The special came to VHS and Beta in 1986 with a bare-bones cassette in the same style of orange packaging (with a magenta ink label) that was standard of Playhouse Video releases at the time. For this special, the photo used on the cover was George Lucas standing among many, many *Star Wars* models at Lucasfilm. (This has long been the photo most commonly associated with this special, despite it only appearing on covers in 1986 and 1992.)



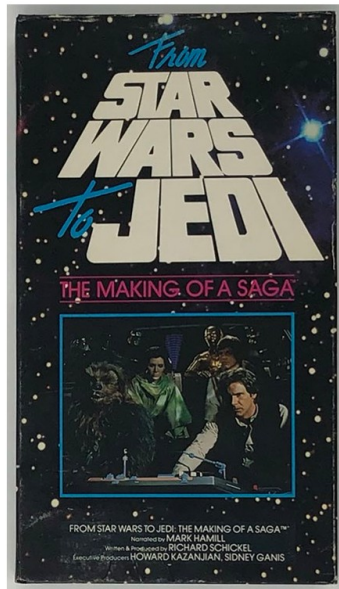
*From Star Wars to Jedi:
The Making of a Saga* (VHS, 1986)



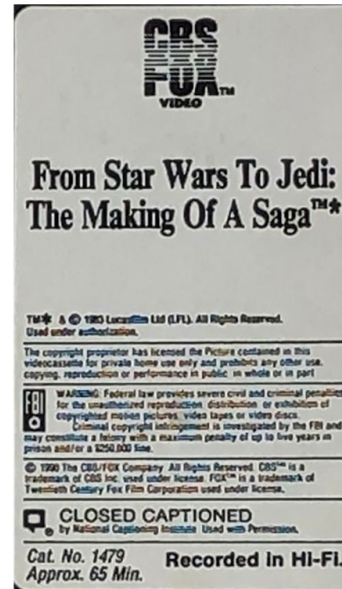
Label

Return of *From Star Wars to Jedi* (1989 – 1995)

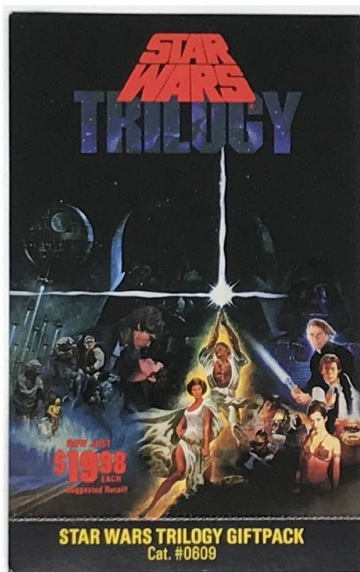
After its initial 1986 Playhouse Video release, *From Star Wars to Jedi: The Making of a Saga* continued to see reissues over the next decade. In 1989, the special appeared via a VHS release from CBS/Fox Video in packaging with a starfield background that many fans later mistakenly believed to be the special's original release. This cassette included a trailer for the 1990 boxed set of the *Original Trilogy* from CBS/Fox Video. Many copies of this release still included the Playhouse Video logo on the label, which was reused from 1986, while others bore an updated, black and white CBS/Fox Video label. Copies also contained the same advertising slip as found in the following year's VHS boxed set, making this its original source.



*From Star Wars to Jedi:
The Making of a Saga* (VHS, 1989)



Label



Insert (front)

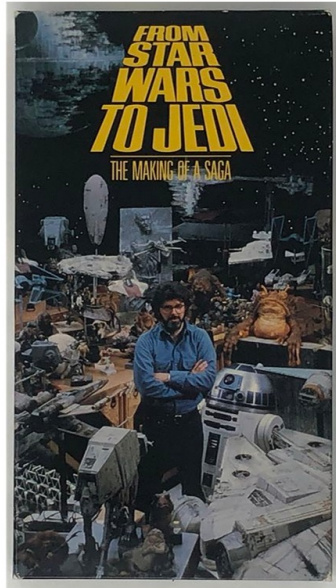


Insert (back)

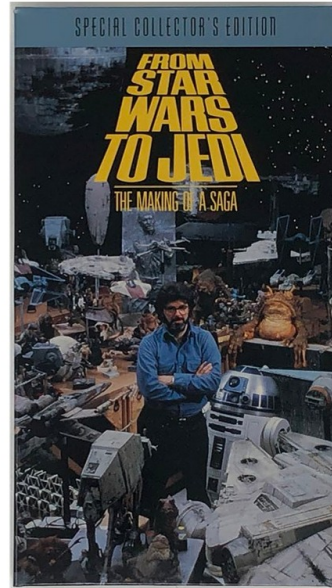
In 1992, the special was reissued with the same content in an individual release and as part of the *Special Letterbox Collector's Edition*¹³³, alongside the first widescreen VHS releases of the *Original Trilogy* in the U.S. These featured the more well-known “Lucas amid *Star Wars* models” cover from

¹³³ See the chapter *The Great Format War* in *Volume I*.

1986 (without a border this time) and the updated blue, green, and white labels that were instituted in 1992. The version from inside the *Special Letterbox Collector's Edition* could be distinguished from its individual release counterpart by noting a silver band at the top of the package that described it as a “Special Collector's Edition,” a designation repeated above the title on the cassette label.



*From Star Wars to Jedi:
The Making of a Saga* (VHS, 1992) –
standard



*From Star Wars to Jedi:
The Making of a Saga* (VHS, 1992) –
Special Collector's Edition



Section at top of case to denote *Special Collector's Edition*



Label (standard)



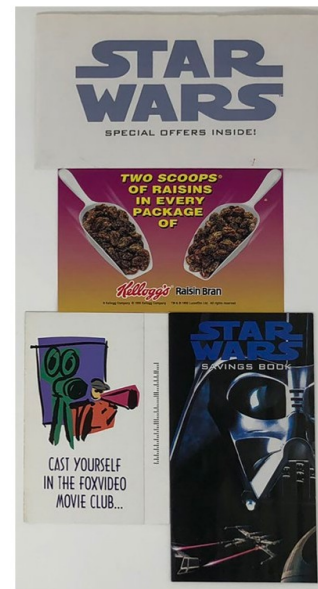
Label (*Special Collector's Edition*)



*From Star Wars to Jedi:
The Making of a Saga*
(VHS, 1995)



Label



Advertising/offers
envelope and content

The most recent reissue of *From Star Wars to Jedi* came in 1995. This VHS release through Fox Video included rear and side packaging similar to the *THX Remastered Edition* VHS releases and the mail-away version of *The Making of Star Wars as Told by C-3PO and R2-D2* from the same year. However, instead of a single character dominating the VHS case, the front of the package included the title in a blue band at the top above a trio of small cutaways of the eyes of Vader, a stormtrooper, and Yoda from the *Original Trilogy* films' own 1995 packaging. The cassette label was essentially

the same as the standard version from 1992. This release also included the same advertising/offers booklet as found in the 1995 film releases.

Unlike *The Making of Star Wars as Told by C-3PO and R2-D2*, *SP FX: The Empire Strikes Back*, and *Classic Creatures: Return of the Jedi*, this special was not included in *The Complete Saga* Blu-ray set in 2011 (nor its reissues), much to the disappointment of longtime fans of the program.

Meanwhile in the United Kingdom (1990)

While *Classic Creatures: Return of the Jedi* and *From Star Wars to Jedi: The Making of a Saga* saw releases on the American market via Playhouse Video in 1985 and 1986, respectively, the UK did not see releases of either until a bit later. In 1990, CBS/Fox Video released what one might call a “trilogy” of *Star Wars* behind-the-scenes specials in matching packaging. However, while American audiences tended to consider *The Making of Star Wars as Told by C-3PO and R2-D2*, *SP FX: The Empire Strikes Back*, and *Classic Creatures: Return of the Jedi* to be the “trilogy” of behind-the-scenes specials for the saga, leaving *From Star Wars to Jedi* as a sort of outlier, the approach taken for this matching UK set instead included *The Making of Star Wars* (with its shortened name), *Classic Creatures: Return of the Jedi*, and *From Star Wars to Jedi: The Making of a Saga*, leaving *SP FX: The Empire Strikes Back* out of the mix (and thereby adding even more reason for collectors to hunt down the 1984 version). Fortunately, all four specials would find their way into *The Definitive Collection* (AKA the *Executor* set) on VHS in 1995.¹³⁴



The Making of Star Wars, *Classic Creatures: Return of the Jedi*, and *From Star Wars to Jedi: The Making of a Saga* (UK VHS, 1990)

¹³⁴ See the chapter *The Original... One Last Time* in *Volume I*.

The Apprentice Has Become the Master (1999 – 2004)

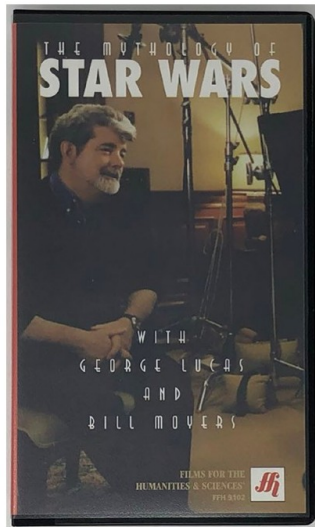
It has been well known for almost as long as the *Star Wars* saga has existed that George Lucas was heavily influenced by the works of Joseph Campbell, author of 1949's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, who became a friend and mentor to Lucas over the years. Campbell passed away in 1987, but not before doing an extensive interview with journalist Bill Moyers. In 1988, that interview formed the basis of a six-episode documentary on PBS, entitled *Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth*. The discussion between Campbell and Moyers had been recorded at Lucas' Skywalker Ranch.

Twelve years after that interview with Campbell, Moyers returned to Skywalker Ranch to interview Lucas about the mythological influences of *Star Wars*, including the works of Campbell. The apprentice had become the master and now shared his own experiences weaving world mythology (including the monomyth concept) into his film saga.

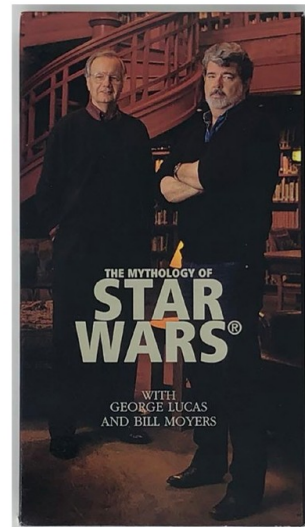
The discussion between Lucas and Moyers did not spark an entire mini-series like the conversation Moyers had conducted with Campbell, but it did spawn a documentary special: *The Mythology of Star Wars with George Lucas and Bill Moyers*. The documentary has seen at least three home video releases since its original airing in 1999, all through Films Media Group, specifically Films for the Humanities and Sciences. All of these releases included the documentary without any bonus content whatsoever.

The first two releases were, as one might expect, on VHS. The first was released in 1999, the same year the documentary aired, and came in a black clamshell case with a picture of Lucas sitting in a chair, facing to the right (presumably toward Moyers, who was not in the shot). The cassette label included the distributor's name, logo, and some legalese at the bottom, with the title simply as *Star Wars* above in plain text.

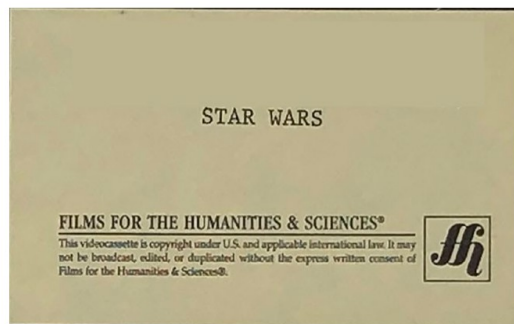
The second VHS release came in 2000 within a more typical, bottom-loading slipcase. Cover art was updated to show Bill Moyers and George Lucas standing together at Skywalker Ranch. The cassette label was again rather plain. The full title was included, along with the product number, while the Films for the Humanities and Sciences name was limited to within the copyright text below without a logo.



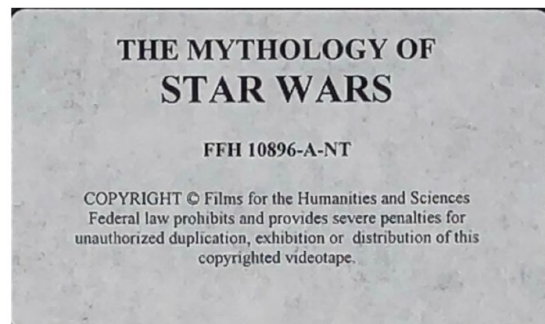
The Mythology of Star Wars with George Lucas and Bill Moyers (VHS, 1999)



The Mythology of Star Wars with George Lucas and Bill Moyers (VHS, 2000)

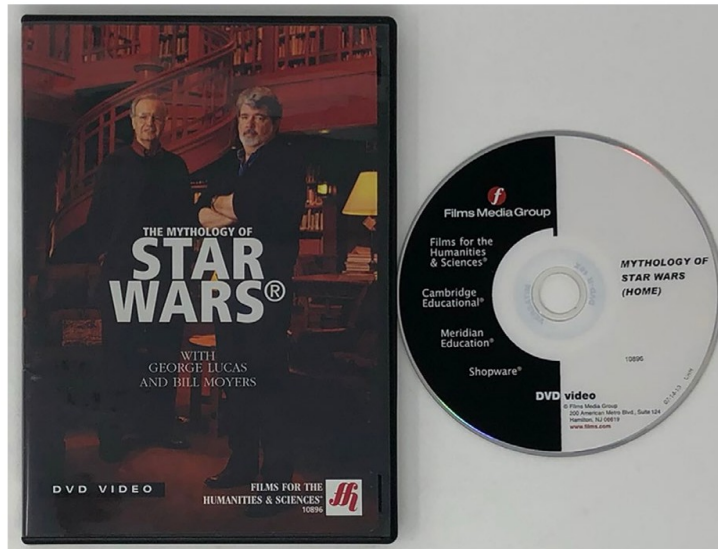


Label (1999)



Label (2000)

A final release (to my knowledge) came in 2004. This time, the special was on DVD. Cover art was essentially the same image as that of the 2000 VHS release, just wider due to the extra space afforded by a DVD case's dimensions. The Films for the Humanities and Sciences logo and name were at the bottom right with the DVD product number, while the lower left area specified that this was a "DVD video" program (by actually saying that, rather than using the typical "DVD video" logo). The disc label was both generic and a bit odd for those familiar with typical retail releases. The label was divided down the middle into a black left side and a white right side. The title, found on the right side, was presented as *Mythology of Star Wars (Home)*, which seemed to be a reference this being a copy meant for retail sales, rather than rental or through educational institutions. The left side listed the various divisions within Films Media Group, including Films for the Humanities & Sciences.



The Mythology of Star Wars with George Lucas and Bill Moyers (DVD, 2004)

Insights from Lucas into the mythological concepts he brought into the *Star Wars* saga can be found in numerous sources, but rarely have we seen so much discussion (in this case specifically relating to the *Original Trilogy* and TPM but even concepts that would help shape AOTC and ROTS) in one place. For fans of that sort of “dry yet fascinating” discussion, this is definitely one to hunt down.

Sometimes You Pay (a Lot) for Quality (2005 – 2006)

Two of the most high-end (read: pricey) home video items of the first decade of the new millennium came not through video outlets but through bookstores.

On Oct. 1, 2005, fans of behind-the-scenes material received an intriguing new addition to the *Star Wars* library: *Dressing a Galaxy: The Costumes of Star Wars*, written by *Prequel Trilogy* costume designer Trisha Biggar. Those interested in a traditional hardcover could purchase a regular edition, but those who were looking for something special could pick up a “deluxe edition” that was truly amazing. It came in a special, cloth-covered, “clamshell” container with a Naboo emblem on its front, which was held closed by a white/gold patterned band of Japanese silk.

Inside the container, the left side held four items: an exclusive DVD (though as we will see in a moment, it did not include any exclusive content); a replica Wookiee belt buckle from ROTS; a fabric swatch from Darth Vader’s ROTS cape; and a certificate of authenticity. The right side held the massive hardback *Dressing a Galaxy*, atop an Insight Editions advertisement postcard, a quality control card (including that copy’s individual number out of only 2,500 produced), and a rather glossy book made of thick cardstock, *Cut from a Different Cloth: Digital Costumes*.

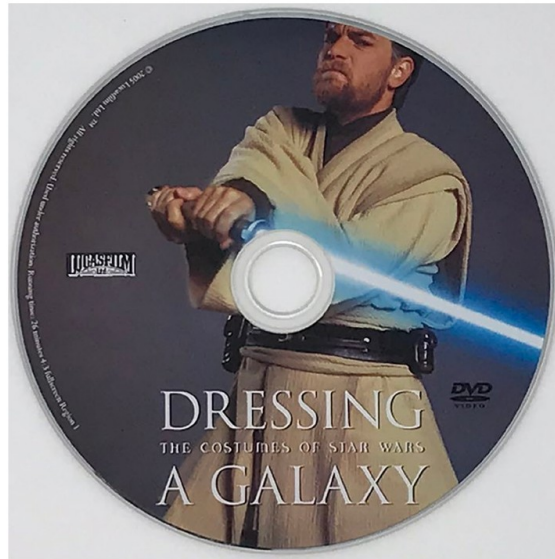
A 9-panel, fold-out, cardboard display, entitled *Star Wars Episodes I – III*

Costume Fabrics, was also included that showed 16 different costumes and pictures of the fabric used to make them. Many (but not all) of those fabric examples also included actual small pieces of the fabric (30 total) attached to the fold-out. The ten that provided real fabric included: Obi-Wan from ROTS (3 swatches); Neimoidian gunner (1 swatch); Padmé's green devoré velvet outfit (3 swatches); Neimoidian aide (3 swatches); Padmé's burgundy cut velvet outfit (1 swatch); Bail Organa's velvet Senate outfit (6 swatches); Anakin Skywalker from ROTS (3 swatches); Palpatine's gray "Federation robe" from the opening of ROTS (4 swatches); Padmé's "peacock and brown" outfit (1 swatch); and the "Handmaiden I" outfit (5 swatches). The six that did not provide fabric samples included: Padmé's Senate dress; Padmé's wedding dress; Zam Wesell's costume; Padmé's black travel dress; Padmé's freighter disguise; and Jango Fett's costume.

The book itself, which featured Padmé with two handmaidens on the dust jacket, included six more booklets, several gatefolds (some exclusive to this version of the book), and (if your copy was from the first 1,000 produced of the 2,500) the signature of Trisha Biggar.



Dressing a Galaxy (2005) in container



Disc label



Container (open)



Fabric samples fold-out (double-sided) – Note that this image shows only six of nine panels on this side due to space limitations.



Dressing a Galaxy hardback book, paperback *Cut from a Different Cloth* book, Insight Editions sheet, and Insight Editions quality control card

The only real disappointment of this exceptional product was the DVD itself. Bearing the book's name and a promotional shot of Obi-Wan (ROTS era with the top of his head cut off by the edge) on its label, the disc was fairly light on content, and it was all existing material. It was only five featurettes, three of which (*Costume Drama*, *P-19*, and *Epic Designs for an Expanding Universe*) were available on the official *Star Wars* website and then on the TPM, AOTC, and ROTS DVD bonus discs, respectively. The other two, *Timeless Designs* and *In-Character Costumes*, were part of the electronic press kits (EPKs) for TPM (for the former) and ROTS (for the latter). While those EPK segments were not commonplace, the fact that they were existing material still helped make this exclusive DVD a bit of a letdown compared to the rest of this outstanding package.

As with many limited editions, the price tag was steep at \$295.¹³⁵

One year later, on Nov. 14, 2006, a similar hardcover release hit bookstores to discuss the Model Shop that created the ships and some

¹³⁵ That's about \$390 in 2020 dollars.

locations of the films. The new book, *Sculpting a Galaxy: Inside the Star Wars Model Shop*, was similarly written by a mastermind of *Star Wars* design, modelmaker Lorne Peterson. As before, a limited edition was available, individually numbered out of only 3,000 copies produced. This was a bit more expensive than *Dressing a Galaxy* at \$395.¹³⁶ The increased price tag made sense, though, given the material involved in producing this fantastic set, which was made all the more attractive by a DVD that was not just reused content as it had been the previous year.

Content was kept in a large (and rather heavy), orange case with the title and a piece of a *Millennium Falcon* model sticking through a hole in the top layer. That top layer then folded to the right to reveal the same model piece and the signature of Lorne Peterson. That second cover layer then folded out to the left “normally” to reveal interior content. Covers used magnets to make the product more secure.

That main interior layer of content included a small envelope (basically the size of a single-disc DVD jacket) labeled with the book’s title that was attached to a silhouette of the *Millennium Falcon* on the left section. Inside were an exclusive DVD (with a stylized, tan and blue label) and a small booklet (akin in size to an audio CD booklet or that found in the jewel case of a VCD) that detailed the other physical items found in the middle portion of this layer of content. The middle section then held several replicas based on *Star Wars* Model Shop work for ANH, including Luke’s landspeeder with a removable base and small models of Luke, Obi-Wan, C-3PO, and R2-D2, alongside seven (six of the same size and one double-width) replicas of panels used when creating the surface of the Death Star.

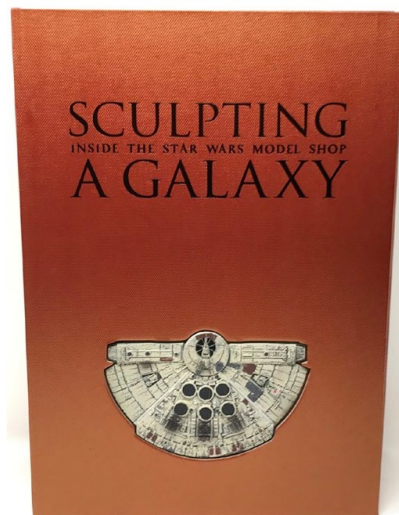
Pulling the left side out further (and thus breaking the magnetic seal holding it “closed”) revealed an area that held the rest of the content beneath the layer of models. This included the *Sculpting a Galaxy* hardback book, which featured the *Millennium Falcon* over Coruscant on its cover and various fold-outs, bound-in booklets, etc. inside, along with the certificate of authenticity, a quality control card (with this individual copy’s number), and an exclusive paperback book, *From Plastics to Pixels: ILM Digital Compositions*, which looked at the digital model work of the prequels.

The DVD was a mixture of new and reused content this time. Reused content was found in a section called *Star Wars Featurettes* and included the AOTC *A Jigsaw Puzzle* web documentary, the ROTS *Ten Gallons of Buildings* web documentary, and the *Episode III Visual Effects Breakdown*, all of which were previously found on DVD releases. There were then two areas labeled

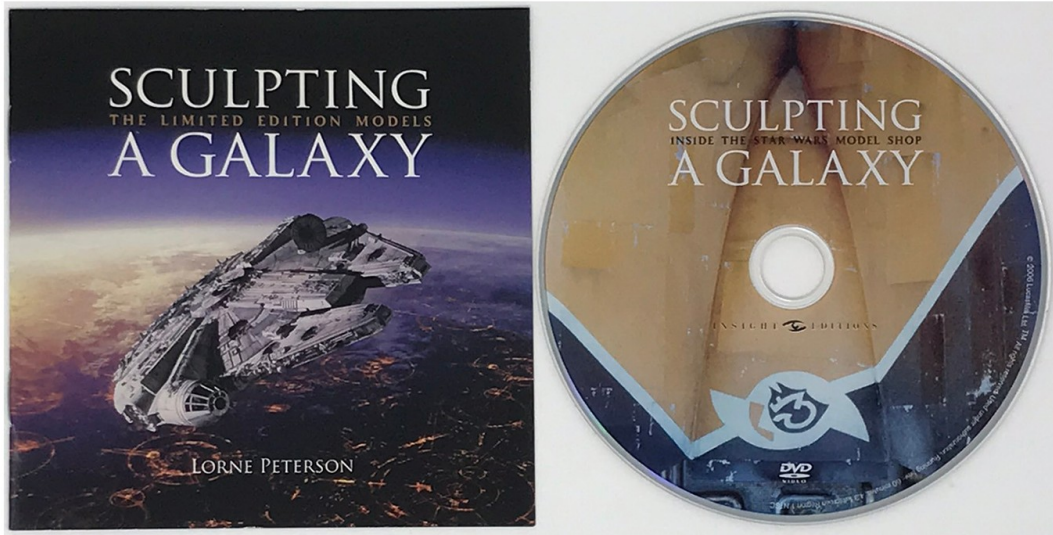
¹³⁶ That’s just over \$520 in 2020 dollars.

as *Lorne's Peterson's Talking Galleries*, which were differentiated between *The View from the Shop* and *Adventures in Modelmaking*. These were a collection of still images (in slideshow video format) and video clips that played with narration and reflections by Peterson himself. Many of the photos were from Peterson's own collection and had not been seen by the public before. Under *The View from the Shop* were two sections: "*Wars*" *Stories* (7 segments) and *The ILM Experience* (8 segments). *Adventures in Modelmaking* had only a single set of segments, which numbered 11. A commercial for Insight Editions was also on the disc.

Perhaps the most unusual aspect of this DVD was how its menu was designed. For DVDs, the introduction to a disc might include animation or video that then was designed to blend (mostly) seamlessly into the actual menus, which were often just still mages. Before landing on a still main menu image with a holographic Lorne Peterson on the left side, this DVD presented a brief montage of shots from the *Star Wars* films, then what *seemed* to be the main menu... until the hologram of Peterson started talking to the viewer! He provided a charming introduction in his typical humble tone: "Hi, I'm Lorne Peterson, the author of the book that you have. Obviously by now you've found the DVD, and hopefully we'll tell you all kinds of little stories that you've never heard before, wonderful anecdotes and the making of the six different films," he says. He then wishes the audience well as they partake in the print and video content, saying, "I hope you enjoy both the book and the DVD as much as we had running through all the old memories, and I hope they are really enjoyable memories for you too. Thank you very much." It was honestly a very endearing opening but also something that could catch viewers by surprise (and, in some cases, including my own, scare the living crap out of them).



Sculpting a Galaxy (2006) in container



Booklet with model replica information (left) and disc label (right)



Sculpting a Galaxy hardback book, paperback *From Plastics to Pixels*, certificate of authenticity, and quality control card



Container (open) – DVD and model info booklet were held in the small envelope attached to the left section (the first section to fold down when closing).

The Making of an Audiobook (2005)

Of course, not all modern books are truly “read.” Many partake of their favorite sagas through audiobooks, which often include not just narration but music, sound effects, and perhaps even a full cast (though that is more rare than a “simple” narrator).

In 2005, LucasBooks and Random House Audio released a special DVD as a giveaway at *Star Wars* Celebration III, entitled *It's a Big Universe: The Making of a Star Wars Audiobook*. The DVD came in a small sleeve with the “Darth Vader over fire” artwork seen on many products, especially toys, at the time. The disc label was a simple affair with logos and text on a black background. The DVD content was relatively light but quite interesting. The 5 – 6 min. program featured a look behind-the-scenes of *Star Wars* audiobook production, including specific glimpses at the ROTS audiobook, written by Matthew Stover and read by Jonathan Davis.



It's a Big Universe (DVD, 2005)

These days, *It's a Big Universe* can be very hard to come by, perhaps owing to a very small print run specifically for the convention where it debuted.

A Sideshow About Sideshow (2005 – 2009)

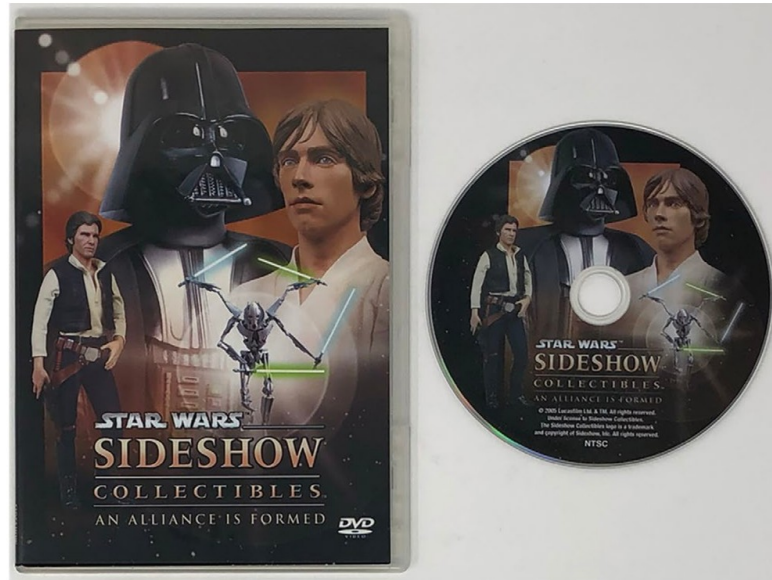
Just like *It's a Big Universe* (and a special *Trivial Pursuit* DVD that we will see in the next chapter), another DVD made the rounds as a “freebie” at *Star Wars* Celebration III in 2005. This time, though, the item in question was part of a larger series of both DVDs and CD-ROMs that spanned at least half a decade.

The product that was given away at the convention was *Sideshow Collectibles: An Alliance is Formed*. This was a DVD to promote *Star Wars* products from Sideshow Collectibles, such as their premium format figures. The DVD came in a slim case (similar to the individual discs in the 2008 *Original* and *Prequel Trilogy* DVD boxed sets¹³⁷ but clear) with case art and disc label art that were nearly identical, featuring Sideshow Collectibles figures of Luke Skywalker and Darth Vader behind Han Solo and General Grievous. The back of the case specifically referred to this DVD as a special production exclusively for the convention.

Disc content was somewhat strange. After an opening crawl that ended as a menu screen, fans could view the *Premium Format Figure Presentation* (a 4 – 5 min. glimpse at the making of Sideshow’s figures) or a strange skit called *Obi-One with the Force*, which basically told the fictional story of how Sideshow Collectibles tried to create a groundbreaking Obi-Wan Kenobi figure and set up a product preview page that was hacked, making the

¹³⁷ See the chapter *Rise of DVD, Demise of VHS* in *Volume I*.

galaxy aware of the figure and bringing Darth Vader's wrath down upon the Sideshow staff. *Obi-One with the Force* included both video of Vader wiping out the staff (for about four min.), along with what amounted to slides of product information. Further product information was available on the disc through DVD-ROM links for use with a computer.



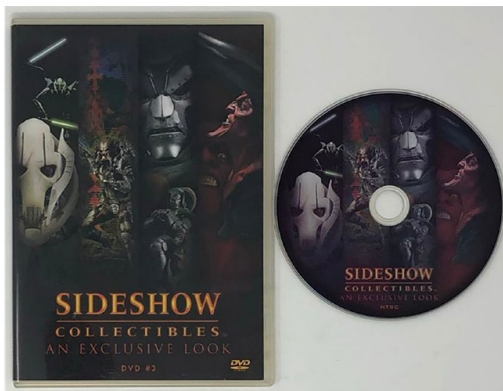
Sideshow Collectibles: An Alliance is Formed (DVD, 2005)

The same year, two other such DVDs were made available to promote Sideshow Collectibles, focusing on both *Star Wars* and non-*Star Wars* items. The first was known as *Sideshow Collectibles: An Exclusive Look*, which was available in at least two variants: a standard version labeled *DVD #3* underneath its title on the cover or a second version that lacked the *DVD #3* marking but instead was labeled as being from San Diego Comic-Con International 2005 at the top. The covers were otherwise similar, featuring General Grievous, the Predator (from its own film series), Marvel Comics' Doctor Doom, and the Lord of Darkness from *Legend*. Disc labels included similar art, with neither marked for the convention or as *DVD #3* on the label, though both were labeled as NTSC beneath the title. *Star Wars* content on this DVD included the same premium format figure video, the *Obi-One with the Force* "featurette," and "turnarounds" of their Maul and Grievous figures. (Other featurettes, extras, turnarounds, and trailers were included but were not relevant to *Star Wars*.)

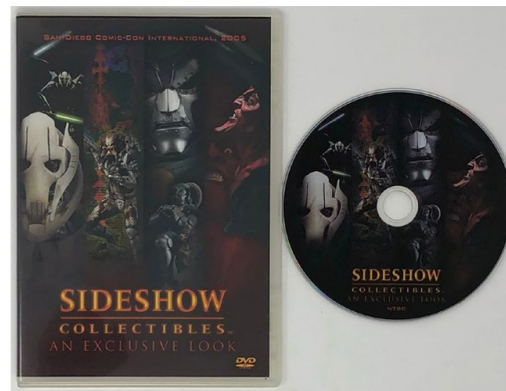
The other 2005 DVD was *Sideshow Collectibles DVD #4* (without any subtitle this time) and featured Pumpkinhead (from the film series of the same name), Boris Karloff's Imhotep from the 1932 classic *The Mummy*, Thing from *Fantastic Four*, and Darth Maul on the cover and disc label. This disc's label noted that it was *DVD #4* and NTSC. This disc's content was divided into six sections on busts, premium format figures, polystone

statues, 12 in. figures, maquettes; and a final section that included “extras” and a FAQ (answers to Frequently Asked Questions). For *Star Wars* fans, the disc included trailers for a 1:1 scale Darth Maul bust and premium figures of Obi-Wan, Darth Vader, and General Grievous. Those were found in their respective areas of the first two menu sections, while the other six segments of the disc did not include any *Star Wars* content.

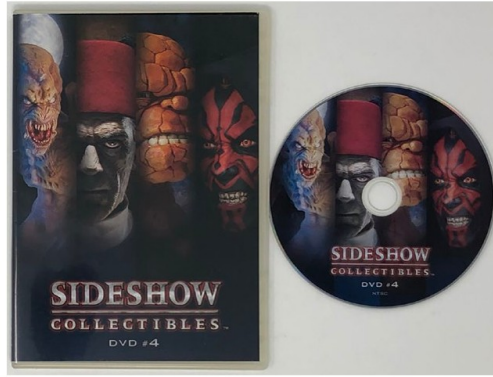
Three years later, another DVD, simply labeled as *Sideshow Collectibles* arrived. As with all of the 2005 DVDs, this 2008 disc came in a clear slim case. Cover art featured Marvel’s Iron Man, Indiana Jones, the Tactical Containment Unit Operator zombie from the company’s *The Dead* line, and Anakin Skywalker (as pre-Mustafar Darth Vader). Art again carried over to the disc label, though the NTSC notation from 2005’s *DVD #4* was replaced with the typical “DVD Video” logo. Inserting the disc caused a trailer for the company to play, which included brief *Star Wars* images. The entire DVD was then divided into two sections: About Us (which allowed replaying the aforementioned trailer) and Extras. The only specific *Star Wars* content to be found was a “backstage pass video” (about 1 min. in length) that detailed the Anakin Skywalker premium format figure (which would probably have been better named the “Darth Vader” premium format figure, as it was Anakin in the brief period between being named Darth Vader and the injuries on Mustafar that would lead to him becoming “more machine now than man”).



Sideshow Collectibles: An Exclusive Look – DVD #3 version (DVD, 2005)



Sideshow Collectibles: An Exclusive Look – SDCC version (DVD, 2005)



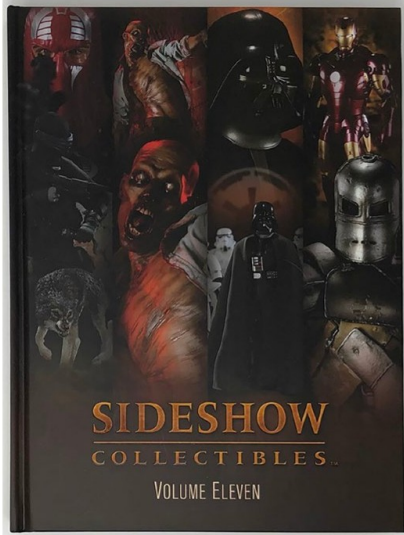
Sideshow Collectibles DVD #4
(DVD, 2005)



Sideshow Collectibles
(DVD, 2008)

Over the years, Sideshow Collectibles had been releasing paperback books that acted as art books and catalogs of their work. *Sideshow Collectibles, Vol. 9*, for example, shared cover art with the two variants of *DVD #3* from the same year. In 2009, Sideshow “upped their game” by releasing *Sideshow Collectibles, Vol. 11* as a hardback book, a hefty tome of over 300 pages. Most importantly for home video collectors, this new volume included another new DVD, held within a small sleeve in the inside front cover, similar to how *Sculpting a Galaxy* stored its disc. Art for the book cover and disc label featured characters from *G.I. Joe* (Cobra Commander, Snake-Eyes, and Timber), the Patient Zero zombie from Sideshow’s *The Dead* product line, *Star Wars* (Darth Vader), and the Marvel Cinematic Universe (Iron Man from the first MCU film). Strangely, while all previous DVDs had used the standard Sideshow Collectibles logo on their labels, this one used an altered logo that changed “Collectibles” to “Collectibles.com” to point readers to the company’s website (as if those reading a book like this or watching its DVD would be ignorant of where to find the company online). The disc label also noted itself as *Volume Eleven* between the logo and a “DVD Video” symbol.

The disc inside was divided into six sections: backstage passes; sideshow teasers; inside looks; distribution partnerships; a section about the “Figure It Out” commercial contest; and “Discover New Products.” There was a moderate amount of *Star Wars* content. The “backstage pass videos” included videos on the Lando Calrissian and scout trooper premium format figures. A teaser video briefly showed clone troopers, stormtroopers, and Darth Vader before formally advertising a sandtrooper figure. The third place “Figure It Out” commercial contest winner (included alongside the two that beat it and the one voted as “fan favorite”) featured a man in an office with *Star Wars* figures. Otherwise, the other sections did not contain any *Star Wars* material.

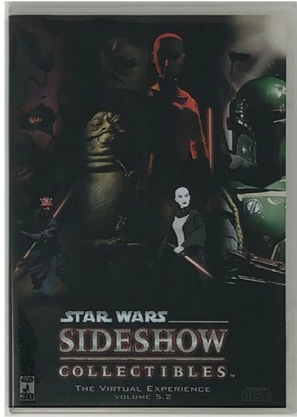


Sideshow Collectibles, Vol. 11 (2009)
with DVD



Disc label

I would imagine that there are other Sideshow Collectibles DVDs out there that include *Star Wars* content that I simply have not acquired or noticed yet, given how long the company has been producing products for the saga. That said, it is important when hunting this promotional product line to keep in mind that many, many similar releases (clear, single-disc slim cases with character art on their covers that include *Star Wars* products) were actually CD-ROM discs, not DVDs or even DVD-ROM discs. Thankfully, these were typically labeled as *The Virtual Experience*, have volume numbers with decimals (e.g. *The Virtual Experience, Vol. 5.2*), and *sometimes* bore a “Compact Disc” symbol. (None of these CD-ROM releases included the DVD logo, but that didn’t necessarily help pin down the nature of a disc, given that *DVD #4* did not include a DVD logo, just the “DVD” in its name.) One of these in particular is of note for *Star Wars* fans: the aforementioned *The Virtual Experience, Vol. 5.2* from 2007, which included Darth Maul, Jabba the Hutt, Asajj Ventress, and Boba Fett on its cover and focused specifically on the company’s history with *Star Wars*. Unfortunately, it’s just a CD-ROM, so whether one would consider it or its ilk part of a Sideshow Collectibles DVD collection, even as a curiosity, is a matter of personal taste.



THE VIRTUAL EXPERIENCE
VOLUME 5.2

Similar items that were labeled *The Virtual Experience* were CD-ROMs, not DVDs.

Example: *Sideshow Collectibles: The Virtual Experience, Vol. 5.2* (CD-ROM)

The Audience is Listening (1990 – 2007)

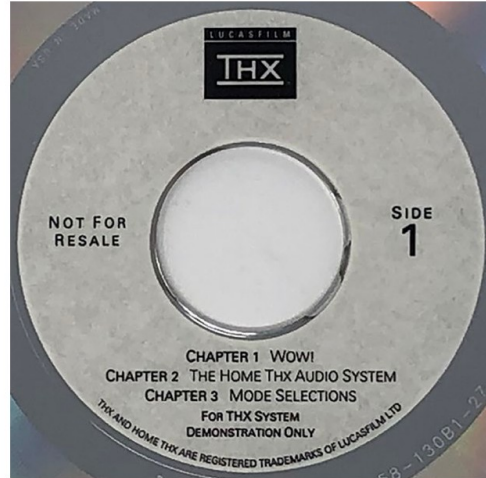
While not solely a *Star Wars* release, many collectors have made a point of picking up a program sometimes referred to just as *THX Wow!* (or *WOW!*), though its full name was a bit of a mouthful: the *THX Home Audio System "Wow!" Demonstration Disc*.

This was a double-sided LaserDisc designed to promote Lucasfilm's THX sound system and help owners of THX home sound systems optimize their audio setup. The first discs were released in 1990, and reissues continued for several years, until at least 1995. While the disc and jacket lacked a copyright date, a paper insert with a guide to contents *did* sometimes have a copyright date, which was based on when a particular pressing of the disc was issued. Unfortunately, this was not always the case. (For example, I have two copies. One's insert is dated 1995, but the other insert has no date noted at all.)

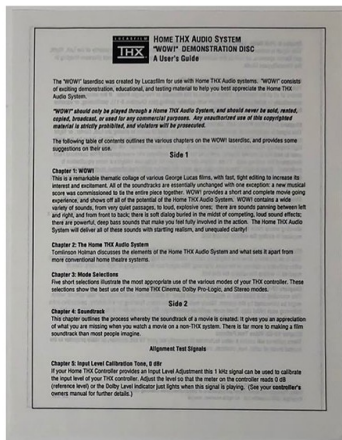
The disc came in a relatively plain, black jacket emblazoned with the THX logo on the front and a track listing on the back. The disc label, which was marked "not for resale," was plain white with the Lucasfilm THX logo at the top. Its first side featured three chapters, the first of which was the "Wow!" sizzle reel, the most well-known aspect of this release.



Home THX Audio System "Wow!"
Demonstration Disc (LaserDisc, 1995)



Disc label



Guide sheet
(1995 version, front)



The bottom right corner of the back
of the guide sheet *could* show a revision date.

THX is a registered trademark of Lucasfilm Ltd.
Dolby, Pro-Logic and Dolby Stereo are trademarks of Dolby Laboratories Licensing Corporation.
Copyright 1995 Lucasfilm Ltd. All rights reserved. reserve

The bottom of the back side of the guide sheet *could* show a copyright date.

"Wow!" ran 7 – 8 min. and was essentially a long montage of clips (sometimes just individual shots) from ANH, TESB, ROTJ, *Willow*, and the first three *Indiana Jones* films, or, as the included 1995 documentation put it, "a remarkable thematic collage of various George Lucas films, with fast, tight editing to increase its interest and excitement." It began by showing a traditional blue THX rectangle on the screen and the message "The audience is listening," followed by the THX logo (with the Lucasfilm name above it and "Sound System" beneath it). It then dove into the montage, showing clips in groups that were somewhat thematic, such as a few seconds where characters from various films were laughing. It ended with

the montage playing to the end credits music from ANH, which then faded out into the THX logo, “The audience is listening,” and disc credits over another THX logo variant (this time with Lucasfilm above it and “Audio” beneath it).

The second chapter on side 1 featured Tomlinson Holman (THX's namesake and developer) discussing the elements of the Home THX Audio System and why it was so special. The third chapter then included five short selections to illustrate the various modes of a THX controller, such as Home THX Cinema and Dolby Pro-Logic modes.

The second side featured a short featurette on how a movie's soundtrack was created at the time. It was a fascinating segment that included footage of the opening of ANH with original on-set audio, then used a portion of *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* to show how the various steps in the development of a soundtrack were carried out. It was an excellent featurette, made all the more impressive by a narration from James Earl Jones. Beyond that chapter, the rest of the second side was seventeen more chapters (though the jacket claimed only sixteen) of various test signals to help sound system owners calibrate their equipment for optimal audio quality.

The “Wow!” and “Soundtrack!” segments were later released on DVD circa 2002 – 2003 as part of the *THX Ultimate Demo Disc*, right around the time that Creative Technology purchased THX from Lucasfilm. While those two segments from the LaserDisc were carried over to DVD, the new disc also included a wider array of content than the original LaserDisc, including the theatrical version of the TPM podrace, small featurettes like one telling the backstory of the THX process, a “retail loop” (content to play on repeat in a store to show off the system), and various THX trailers (including the hilarious *The Simpsons* trailer with Grandpa Simpson urging us to “turn it up”).

Two versions of this DVD were released, both in jewel cases (similar to CDs or many VCDs). The cover art for the first version (2002 – 2003) featured a series of images with the THX logo in a sort of film strip against a background of water at night and a sphere containing both lightning and clouds. The title was on the top left, while the THX logo was on the bottom right. The second version (2004) simply used lines of color with the THX logo at the bottom, along with a circular area to the top right to denote the 10th Anniversary of THX. Running along the middle was the title, followed by “provided to you by Onkyo,” the consumer electronics company behind this version. This 2004 variant was sent to home entertainment stores to be played as a demonstration of THX and draw customers into discussions about such equipment.

Disc labels were identical for both: silver information and logos against a blue background.



Left: *THX Ultimate Demo Disc* home installer version (DVD, 2003)
Right: *THX Ultimate Demo Disc* Onkyo store version (DVD, 2004)



THX Demo Disc II (DVD, 2007)

2007 brought a second, similar disc, known as *THX Demo Disc II*. This DVD dropped all of the content from the previous DVDs and LaserDisc in favor of new videos on setting up a home theater system and numerous movie, music, and even video game clips to showcase THX mastering. (From a *Star Wars* standpoint, the saga's primary presence on this new disc was a clip from the Battle of Coruscant in *ROTS*.) Like the previous DVDs and LaserDisc, material was included to assist consumers in optimizing

their own home viewing setup. This “THX Optimizer 2.0” made use of a pair of blue-lensed paper glasses (resembling anaglyph 3D glasses but with the same color for both eyes) that were included in the package.

This 2007 disc (and its glasses) came in a slim DVD case with artwork based on a level indicator for a home stereo system with the THX logo and a blue bar with its title providing some low-key indicators for what was inside. The disc label used a similar background image. Rather than having a THX logo *and* referring to itself as *THX Demo Disc II* as the case did, the disc label simply had a THX logo above the central hole and called itself *Demo Disc II* (sans *THX*) beneath the hole.

Each of these THX discs included minimal *Star Wars* content but served to use Lucasfilm's most high-value, high-visibility franchise to assist in showcasing one of their most important advancements in the improvement of theatrical and home viewing across the globe. Those interested in THX as a mastering process or theatrical presentation standard will find these demo discs enlightening.

Live the Adventure (2019)

On May 31, 2019, *Star Wars* fans were invited into the galaxy far, far away through the launch of the Disneyland (Anaheim, CA) theme park's Galaxy's Edge, a brand new *Star Wars* “land” at the park. Walt Disney World (Orlando, FL) followed shortly thereafter on Aug. 29, 2019, with their own, similar version of Galaxy's Edge as part of Disney's Hollywood Studios. The launch of both parks was considered essentially finished on Dec. 5, 2019, and Jan. 17, 2020, in California and Florida, respectively, with the opening of the *Rise of the Resistance* ride.

The Galaxy's Edge concept was based around the idea of the theme park locations as part of the planet Batuu, centered around Black Spire Outpost. This was a massive, multimedia launch that included not just the theme park (where one could be immersed in the saga in person) but also numerous tie-in products like novels from Del Rey and Disney Lucasfilm Press, comics from Marvel and IDW, action figures, and even eventually with the Nov. 19, 2020, Oculus Quest release of ILMxLAB's virtual reality game *Tales from the Galaxy's Edge*, which allowed fans to visit Batuu in immersive VR.

The theme park's opening was also promoted by a behind-the-scenes special on Freeform (formerly ABC Family), entitled *Galaxy's Edge: Adventure Awaits*, which aired on Sept. 29, 2019. This special was just one part of a massive marketing push through various Disney-owned networks (ABC, Disney Channel, Disney Junior, ESPN, etc.) and shows (*Good Morning America*, *Live with Kelly and Ryan*, *The View*, *Nightline*, etc.). In most cases, though, the marketing was limited to segments, Easter eggs, or other small impacts on the programs. This was a full-length documentary about

the park, hosted by Neil Patrick Harris with celebrity guests like Kaley Cuoco, Keegan-Michael Key, Jay Leno, Sarah Hyland, and Miles Brown. While hosted by Harris, the special was narrated by none other than Billy Dee Williams.

To date, this special has not had a release on physical home media (and one seems unlikely given the nature of the special), but it *has* been added to the Disney+ library.

For a More Digital Age (2020)

Galaxy's Edge: Adventure Awaits was added to Disney+ on Mar. 27, 2020, almost exactly six months after its original Freeform airing. No extras were included.

Inside the Bucket (2021)

On the second anniversary of the launch of Disney+, on what the company was now referring to as “Disney+ Day,” a short documentary was released to take a look back at the development and portrayal of Boba Fett, just over a month before the character’s own streaming series, *The Book of Boba Fett*, was slated to premiere. This was *Under the Helmet: The Legacy of Boba Fett*, a 21 min. foray into the character’s earliest roots and modern resurgence, which even included George Lucas talking about *The Star Wars Holiday Special*, which he is well-known to loathe.

For a More Digital Age (2021)

Under the Helmet: The Legacy of Boba Fett remains a Disney+ exclusive after being launched on Nov. 12, 2021, without any extras.

Conclusion: Shining a Spotlight on Brilliance

One has to wonder sometimes which was more captivating or awe-inspiring: the fictional content of the *Star Wars* films or the technological leaps and skills of the filmmakers who made them? In an era in which behind-the-scenes content is typically the domain of internet videos or bonus features for film or TV season releases, having separate home video products for “making of” specials seems to be mostly a thing of the past, but for a while, this was our best means of catching a glimpse (in video format, at least) of the “saga behind the saga” and its fascinating (and often all-too-human) cast of characters.

18 A CANTINA FULL OF ODDBALLS (1990 – 2015)

Thus far in this guide, we have focused upon the *Star Wars* live action films, the telemovies, the various cartoon series, and even behind-the-scenes content. In so doing, we have journeyed through the core of my own collection with clearly defined parameters and an eye toward being comprehensive (albeit less so for behind-the-scenes material).

Now for something somewhat different.

Numerous other *Star Wars* items have appeared in the U.S. home video market over the years, oddball releases that do not fit within the boundaries of the previous chapters. We will explore many of those items in this final product-focused chapter, though I make no claims that this chapter is comprehensive. There are many releases that would fit a catch-all category like this one, so this chapter will focus more on noteworthy releases and developments, rather than trying to document every minor release.

Do You Think This is Some Sort of Game? (1996)

One place you might not expect to find a *Star Wars* VHS cassette is inside the box of a *Star Wars* board game. While a rare occurrence, this was the case for an unusual VHS cassette in 1996, found packaged as part of *Star Wars: The Interactive Video Board Game*. Released by Parker Brothers (bought by Hasbro in 1991), this board game tasked Rebel players with trying to sabotage the Death Star before it could destroy D’rinba IV, site of a Rebel supply base. Along the way, one of the players became Darth Vader’s secret apprentice (long before the creation of Galen “Starkiller” Marek for *The Force Unleashed*). That player then attempted to thwart his former comrades.

The actual video content was entitled *Assault on the Death Star*, the name

of the story in which players were participating. The cassette label, however, simply restated the name of the board game, rather than the story title, against a blue background. The cassette did not include any type of protective sleeve or case whatsoever.

During the game, the hour-long VHS played constantly as a running countdown to D'rinba IV's destruction. Gameplay was fast and furious to get as much done as possible before Darth Vader and other video segments interrupted gameplay for events like progressing the story, sections of the board being locked down, players being captured, and (as previously noted) turning one of the players to the Dark Side to assist in stopping the other players from winning the game.



Star Wars: The Interactive Video Board Game (1996) with VHS cassette



VHS cassette – Notice the lack of a case/cover.



Game content (except cassette)

The video was rather bizarre and did not make much sense when viewed outside the context of playing the game, but it boasted some impressive credentials. It included repurposed *Original Trilogy* footage, unused footage (twenty years before *Rogue One* did so to bring back Gold and Red Leaders), and brand new footage recorded on original sets with original props two decades after the production of ANH. The new footage was shot with some members of the ANH crew, including director of photography Gilbert Taylor. Even more impressive, Darth Vader was portrayed in the new material by two of the men who brought him to life for the *Original Trilogy*, David Prowse (body) and James Earl Jones (voice).¹³⁸

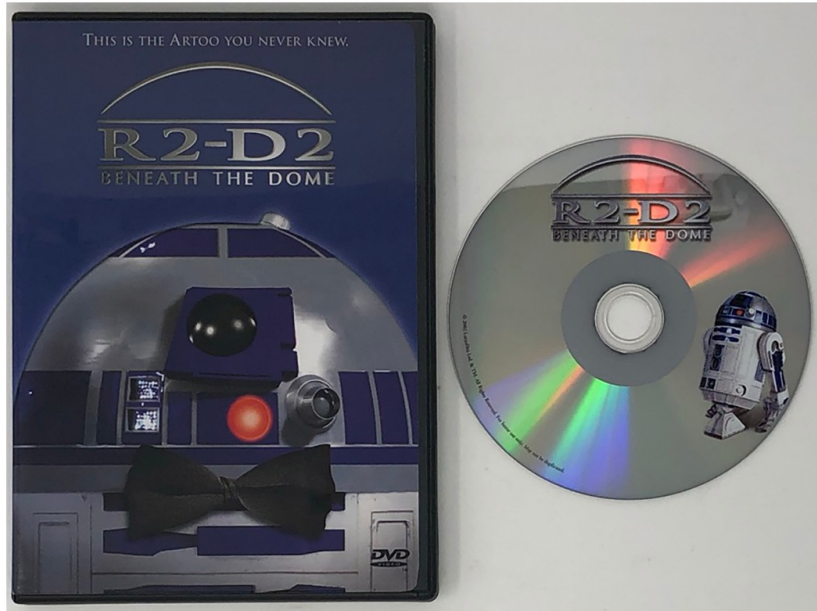
This strange tale of Death Star sabotage was eventually drawn into the *Star Wars* saga's Legends continuity through Abel G. Peña's *The Dark Forces Saga* articles for Wizards of the Coast, wherein the four Rebel player characters were assumed to be Kyle Katarn, Shira Brie (later known as the Dark Lady Lumiya), Corwin Shelvay, and Erling Tredway.

R2-D2 in a Bow Tie (2002)

One of the strangest official *Star Wars* products was a mockumentary created by the cast and crew of *Attack of the Clones* in 2001. *R2-D2: Beneath*

¹³⁸ It is sometimes claimed that this game featured the first new live action footage shot for *Star Wars* since *Epics: The Battle of Endor*, but it did not. That honor goes to the video game *Rebel Assault II: The Hidden Empire* in Nov. 1995.

the Dome presented a fake “true Hollywood story” program about *Star Wars* star R2-D2 (the character, *not* Kenny Baker). The droid goes through many of the ups and downs of Hollywood stars from early success to deep depression and hopes for a comeback. “Bizarre” does not begin to cover it.



R2-D2: *Beneath the Dome* (DVD, 2002) – Best Buy and Musicland exclusive

The mockumentary was aired in three weekly segments on FOX, beginning on Nov. 25, 2001, and simultaneously released on the official *Star Wars* website. It was eventually released on DVD in a standard case (with R2-D2 wearing a bow-tie on the cover because “bow ties are cool”¹³⁹) on Dec. 26, 2002, as an exclusive to Best Buy and Musicland in the U.S.¹⁴⁰ The DVD included all three segments but did not include any bonus features. Its label was a simple affair with the mockumentary’s logo at the top and R2-D2 to the right, yet otherwise bare silver/clear except for a tiny bit of legal text running along the left edge.

This DVD actually included an “Easter egg” in the form of an extra set of 46 still images featuring R2-D2 (including an odd bungee jump stunt). To access this gallery, one would highlight “Play All” on the main menu, then click to move to the right, which would create a blue, highlighted R2-

¹³⁹ We Whovians miss you, Raggedy Man!

¹⁴⁰ Best Buy had purchased Musicland in 2001, so this was akin to Walmart and Sam’s Club having the same store exclusives.

D2 “eye” segment within the “dome” of the title. Selecting that “eye” provided access to the gallery.

***Star Wars* Not Quite in Concert (2005, 2015)**

Sometimes when you wanted to find an unusual *Star Wars* home video release, you looked in the toy aisle, as we saw back in *Rewriting the Clone Wars*. Other times, you needed to check out a bookstore, as seen last chapter. Every once in a while, though, you needed to dive into a music section and flip through some CDs.

Starting in 1999, John Williams' *Star Wars* music and film clips were sometimes merged into music videos, which garnered attention on MTV¹⁴¹ and elsewhere. The first of these was “Duel of the Fates,” based on TPM, which was followed in 2002 by the AOTC-based “Across the Stars.” In 2005, during the build-up to ROTS, a new video (this time bearing a different name than its music) entitled “A Hero Falls” (based on “Battle of the Heroes”) was released on the official *Star Wars* website. It was clear that *Star Wars* music could enthrall with a power similar to that of the films.

On May 3, 2005, the official soundtrack for *Revenge of the Sith* was released on CD (compact disc). Aside from the excellent fifteen tracks of music, this release contained something special that no other *Star Wars* soundtrack had: a DVD entitled *Star Wars: A Musical Journey*.¹⁴²

After a brief trailer for *Revenge of the Sith: The Video Game*, the disc featured sixteen music videos in the style of “Duel of The Fates,” “Across the Stars,” and “A Hero Falls.”¹⁴³ When viewed in order (with or without an optional introduction to each by Ian McDiarmid), the songs took viewers/listeners through *Episodes I – VI* chronologically, providing a rather different way to experience George Lucas' saga.

The DVD label featured Darth Vader with his lightsaber ignited against a red background, while the audio CD label included Darth Sidious with his own lightsaber ignited. The familiar Drew Struzan version B poster art was used for the jewel case cover. The insert that presented the cover art

¹⁴¹ You know, back when “Music Television” focused on music.

¹⁴² The success of this project led to a musical concert series. The concert was also called *Star Wars: A Musical Journey* when it premiered in London on Apr. 10, 2009, but its name changed to *Star Wars: In Concert* by its Oct. 1, 2009, tour launch.

¹⁴³ These three were actually included under the headings of “Dark Forces Conspire,” “A Fateful Love,” and “A Hero Falls.”

unfolded into six panels, one of which showed an image of Anakin mixed with Vader (opposite the cover art), while the other four panels made a larger image with Mustafar in the center, cybernetic Vader on the top left, human Vader in the center, and Grievous on the top right. A smaller image of George Lucas consulting with John Williams was framed at the bottom left. Otherwise, this spread included relevant information about the product, such as a track listing. The opposite side of the unfolded insert presented an image that included Grievous in the foreground with a small clone trooper, large Obi-Wan, large Anakin, and small Yoda behind him. Vader (in his armor) loomed above it all in the background, as Eta-2 Actis Jedi interceptors took to the skies to either side of the newly-minted Sith Lord. A circular sticker on the release noted the inclusion of the bonus DVD (or to put it another way, the standard version of this release had a single sticker on the front, which will help distinguish it from some variants).



ROTS soundtrack (CD, 2005) with *A Musical Journey* (DVD)

The DVD itself is sometimes found sold as if this was a separate product, but do not be deceived. This DVD was *only* released as a pack-in bonus for the ROTS soundtrack CD and *not* made available elsewhere.

For those seeking out this unusual home video item, it is important to know that there were several versions that one might find. The most common was simply a single jewel case that held the CD, DVD, and an insert that folded out into a small poster.



Poster (back of unfolded insert)



Unfolded insert (front)

That same standard version could also be found in a long CD box¹⁴⁴ that was similar to the anti-theft packaging used for DVDs at club stores like Costco. (Cover art remained Drew Struzan's version B poster image.) This type of packaging was used early in the era of audio CDs to allow CDs to sit alongside vinyl LPs in racks found in most music stores. Eventually, CDs could instead be found in shrink-wrapped jewel cases that some stores would put into plastic anti-theft rigs that varied by store and were not part of the actual product packaging. Most releases of the ROTS soundtrack were simply jewel cases in shrink wrap, sometimes in anti-theft rigs, but it was also one of the few CDs in 2005 that could still be found in the longer boxes that had dominated CD racks years before.

¹⁴⁴ For comparison, a standard CD jewel case measured 5.59 in. x 4.92 in., while these long boxes measured 5.75 in. x 12.38 in. Both were approximately the same depth.



Sticker found on *all* non-longbox copies of the ROTS soundtrack (not just store exclusives) to note the inclusion of the *A Musical Journey* DVD

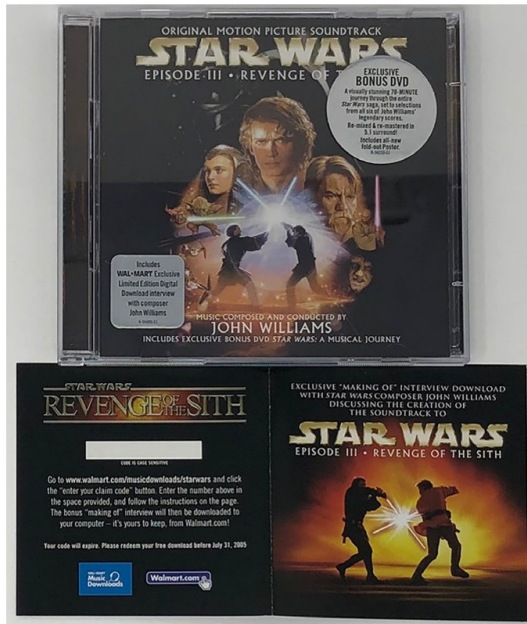


ROTS soundtrack (CD, 2005)
with *A Musical Journey* (DVD) –
long box version

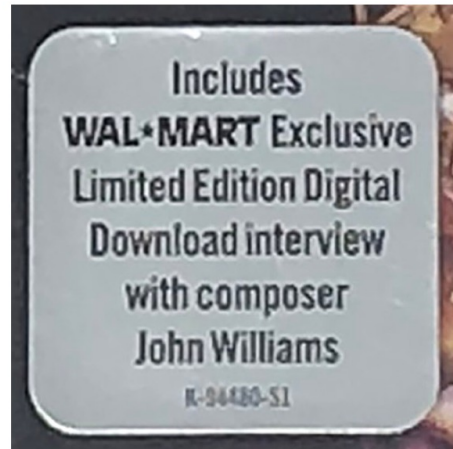
At least two store variants of this soundtrack existed. Walmart offered a copy that included a special digital code that could be redeemed via Walmart’s now-defunct Music Downloads website¹⁴⁵ to acquire a video interview with John Williams. Unfortunately, that offer expired on July 31, 2005, allowing potential buyers only 90 days from the CD’s retail release to redeem the code. Thus, copies could frequently be found on stores shelves that still advertised the exclusive content via the code inside, long after the codes themselves had expired.

The front of the code slip included a shot of the Mustafar duel (though not the same one we’ve seen so often). This release could be easily distinguished by a second sticker (a rectangle with rounded corners) on the case that noted that this version “includes Walmart exclusive limited edition digital download interview with composer John Williams” (with no mention of the very narrow redemption window).

¹⁴⁵ The site closed in Aug. 2011.



ROTS soundtrack (CD, 2005) with *A Musical Journey* (DVD) – Walmart exclusive (with code slip folded open)



Sticker denoting Walmart exclusive digital content

Meanwhile, Target offered a much more impressive exclusive version of the *Revenge of the Sith* soundtrack. The standard CD/DVD release was in its regular jewel case, but then a second audio CD in its own cardboard jacket was shrink wrapped to the back of the jewel case. This was *Star Wars: The Corellian Edition*, an audio disc that featured 13 tracks of John Williams' music from throughout *Episodes I – VI*. The new disc's label was simply dark red without any images, while the cardboard jacket featured Darth Vader in the center, flanked by Chewbacca, Luke, and Obi-Wan on the left and Maul, Han, and Padmé on the right. A poorly-placed FBI copyright warning sticker was adhered directly to the jacket over that excellent artwork, underneath the shrink wrap, but removing it without damaging the jacket was not particularly difficult. Two years later, on Oct. 2, 2007, *The Corellian Edition* received a wide release on its own in a standard jewel case with an updated label, making this exclusive version from 2005 less sought after but still an excellent bonus item when originally released. Those seeking to add the ROTS soundtrack with *A Musical Journey* to their home video library might find it worthwhile to hunt down the Target exclusive in order to have the most elaborate American version available of this release.

Obviously, this version was most easily distinguished from its peers by the extra disc jacket within the shrink wrap, but when viewing from the front, it could also be identified by a tall, rectangular (with rounded edges) sticker that declared that this version “also contains exclusive all new *Star Wars* CD” and that it was “available only at Target.”



ROTS soundtrack (CD, 2005) with *A Musical Journey* (DVD) – Target exclusive:
ROTS soundtrack (left) and *The Corellian Edition* (right)



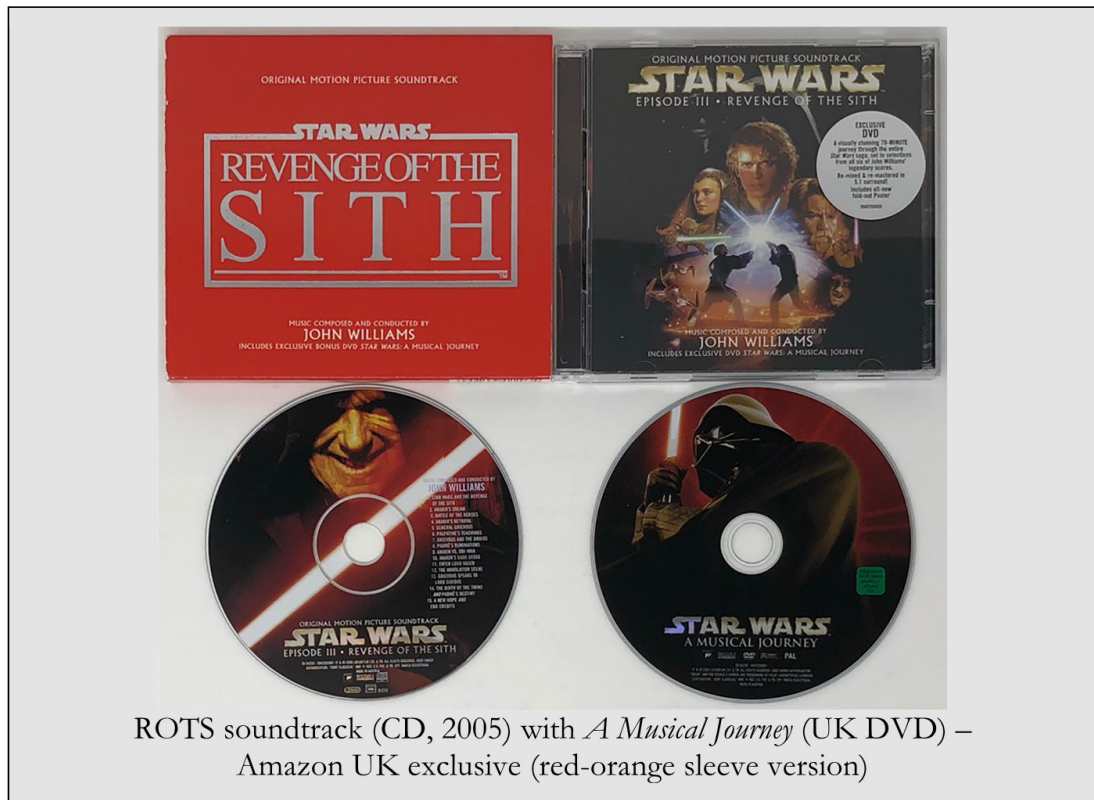
The Corellian Edition comparison: 2005 Target exclusive (top) vs. 2007 retail release (bottom)



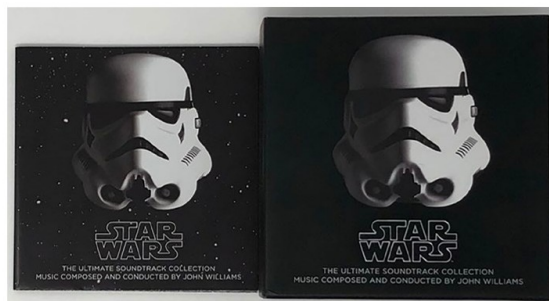
Sticker denoting Target exclusive content

Meanwhile in the United Kingdom (2005)

Fans in the UK had the option of purchasing the ROTS soundtrack CD (with *A Musical Journey* on DVD) through Amazon UK with two different, limited edition slipcovers. The slipcovers were available in red-orange and gold. Both bore the film's logo, credits, etc. on the front with track listings, legalese, etc. on the back. Otherwise, the product inside was a standard retail version of the release (with cover and labels similar to the U.S. release), including a PAL copy of *A Musical Journey*.



For those looking for something beyond just ROTS, Sony Classical released an 11-disc package in late 2015 entitled *The Ultimate Soundtrack Collection*. Soundtrack CDs were included for *Episodes I – VI* in CD jackets that were designed to resemble vinyl LP (record) jackets, only in CD scale. Soundtracks for TPM and AOTC were one disc each, while the *Original Trilogy* films each had two discs. For ROTS, both of the original 2005 discs were repackaged, meaning that this set included the ROTS soundtrack CD and the *A Musical Journey* DVD. A final disc included interviews with John Williams and Harrison Ford.



The Ultimate Soundtrack Collection (CD, 2015) with *A Musical Journey* (DVD)



Disc jackets



TPM jacket (interior) and label



AOTC jacket (interior) and label



ROTS jacket (interior) and labels



ANH jacket (interior) and labels



TESB jacket (interior) and labels



ROTJ jacket (interior) and labels

All discs, within their jackets, were stored within a box with a

stormtrooper helmet on the cover. The box was fairly compact at 5.19 in. x 5.19 in. x 2 in., with very little excess space inside, keeping the disc jackets snugly tucked away. Also included were three 3.31 in. x 4.88 in. stickers¹⁴⁶ and a content guide.



Bonus disc (interviews) jacket and label



Art cards

One aspect of this set that made it interesting for collectors was that the disc label for the DVD (and the ROTS CD for that matter) were different than those in the standard releases from a decade earlier. The CD label featured Grievous on his wheel bike instead of Darth Sidious. The DVD label was similar to the original design, but since this set was produced for sale in both the U.S. and Europe, it bore a German rating and Sony Classical logo where the original disc's FBI copyright warning had been, and the information beneath the title was different. In being produced for the American and European markets, the disc was Region 0 (region-free), and collectors in the U.S. may be pleasantly surprised to learn that despite the German rating symbol, the disc was NTSC.

For those seeking variant means of acquiring *A Musical Journey*, this was the most expensive means of doing so, but that was to be expected. Home video collectors were not the target audience for this package, after all.

¹⁴⁶ The stickers were odd. Two were based on ANH, while the third was based on ROTJ, leaving out TESB (and the *Prequel Trilogy*). Furthermore, one of the ANH stickers showed Leia pushed up against Chewbacca, seemingly with part of her top missing, as if she was huddled up against him to hide a bare breast. (The top was somehow out of alignment, so it *was* there, but the coloration and angle made things appear a bit scandalous. The same image was used for the cover of *Rolling Stone* magazine in Aug. 1977 to promote the film.)

Wait, What the Heck is a PVD? (2004 – 2005)

So far, this guide has dealt with American *Star Wars* releases on Super 8, VHS, Beta, CED, LaserDisc, DVD, MiniDVD, Blu-ray, Blu-ray 3D, Ultra HD Blu-ray, and even, to an extent, digital platforms. We've even touched on some foreign releases in formats that didn't have *Star Wars* releases in the United States like Video 2000, Video8, VHD, UMD, and VCD. For *Star Wars* home viewing in the U.S., surely those are all the relevant formats, right?

“No. There is another.”

The other I speak of was an obscure format that landed a pair of oft-forgotten twin releases on the American market: PVD. A PVD was a Personal Video Disc, a format resembling a DVD that was slightly too small.¹⁴⁷ PVDs were used exclusively with VideoNow portable video players produced by Hasbro and released through Hasbro subsidiary Tiger Electronics around 2003 – 2006. Discs were able to hold 450 MB, allowing for only about half an hour of content, which made them ideal for single episodes of half-hour cartoons, though not particularly suitable for much beyond that. (The format was supported most heavily by Nickelodeon, as one might expect.)

Discs were sold in toy sections, as were the players themselves, which varied during the format's short life cycle. The first VideoNow players in 2003 played only in black and white and had no backlight, making them similar in screen type to the original Nintendo Game Boy (1989). This initial version had a screen resolution of only 80x80 pixels. A second wave of players arrived in 2004. Known as VideoNow Color, these updated players added color (obviously) via a larger, backlit display that now measured 216x160 pixels. Alongside the VideoNow Color was a smaller, more rugged (i.e. flexible body) version made for preschoolers, labeled VideoNow Jr. In 2005, the VideoNow XP was released with a larger screen¹⁴⁸, game-playing capacity (for simple fare that barely qualified as “games” like one might find built into a DVD), and navigation using menus. The final version, VideoNow Color FX, was a translucent (see-through) variant of the VideoNow Color, available in different colors beginning in 2006.

¹⁴⁷ A DVD, Blu-ray (regular, 3D, or Ultra HD), or VCD measured 4.72 in. in diameter. A PVD was about 4.19 in., in diameter.

¹⁴⁸ Finding the exact screen resolution for the VideoNow XP online today is extremely difficult. I have yet to find a source that can confirm anything other than that it was larger than the VideoNow Color (original and FX) screen.



VideoNow Color FX (closed)



VideoNow Color FX (open with disc)

A typical player (the VideoNow Color FX, for example) opened like a clamshell, similar to a portable CD player, and had its screen on the top, alongside four control buttons (previous, next, play/pause, and stop). Earphones were supported, but sound was limited to mono output, due to the limitations that came from how PVDs were authored. (For the sake of being thorough, the front edge included a power adapter port, button to open the disc tray, and earphone jack, while the back edge included brightness and volume dials.)

The VideoNow XP, on the other hand, resembled a portable video game system (most closely the Nintendo Game Boy Advance SP, circa 2003). Rather than having its screen simply built into the top face of the device, the XP screen was instead on a folding arm that shifted from “closed” position to an angled position for viewing. The rest of the device made up the “shell” over an inserted disc. The top of that shell included buttons to control its game mode (see below), along with standard play/pause, stop, forward, and back buttons along its edge. Volume and brightness buttons were found on the back edge of the shell, while a sliding latch on the front edge allowed the shell to open so that discs could be inserted. To prevent accidentally hitting a button, there was also a switch on that edge to lock the system from further button inputs. (Again, just to be thorough the same edge also included an earphone jack and power adapter port.)



VideoNow XP (closed)



Screen open

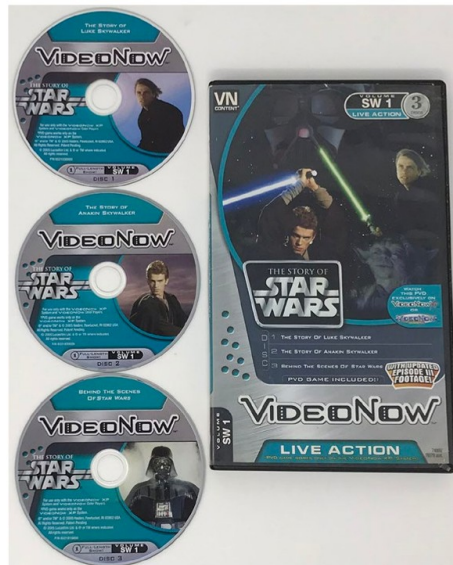


Disc tray open (with disc)

Star Wars saw two releases on PVD that were nearly identical (but *not* entirely so as is often claimed). Both were called *The Story of Star Wars* (which, if it sounds familiar as something other than a PVD, is quite true, so stay with me here). The overall packages were each labeled as volume “SW 1” for VideoNow. Each contained three PVDs, labeled as *The Story of Luke Skywalker* (with Luke on the disc label), *The Story of Anakin Skywalker* (with Anakin on the label), and *Behind the Scenes of Star Wars* (with Darth Vader on the label).



The Story of Star Wars (PVD, 2004)



The Story of Star Wars (PVD, 2005)

The original release of this pack was in 2004 and recognizable by a package design that (in a way eerily reminiscent of some early VHS releases) included a red triangle in the top right corner that labeled this as a “3 disc pack.” The overall color scheme was silver(ish). The main artwork took up the bulk of the upper right area of the cover and included Anakin and Luke with a shadowy Yoda to their lower right and Darth Vader’s mask looming behind them. A trapezoidal logo provided the set’s name directly beneath

Yoda, while the names of the individual discs were listed below the title in a purple region, next to a small purple circle noting the aforementioned “SW 1” volume number. The product line name (“VideoNow Color”) ran at a right angle along the left side, with a small logo in the upper left corner of the cover, which noted this as “VN Content” (presumably so unwary buyers wouldn’t pick these up and assume they were DVDs).

Disc labels were primarily gray and showed the character on the disc in a small triangular “window” on the left side of the disc’s center hole.

Disc 1, *The Story of Luke Skywalker*, featured C-3PO and R2-D2 telling Luke’s story through clips taken from the *Original Trilogy*. Disc 2, *The Story of Anakin Skywalker*, presented the droids discussing the life of Anakin through clips pulled almost entirely from *The Phantom Menace* and *Attack of the Clones*, which made sense, given that *ROTS* had not been released yet.

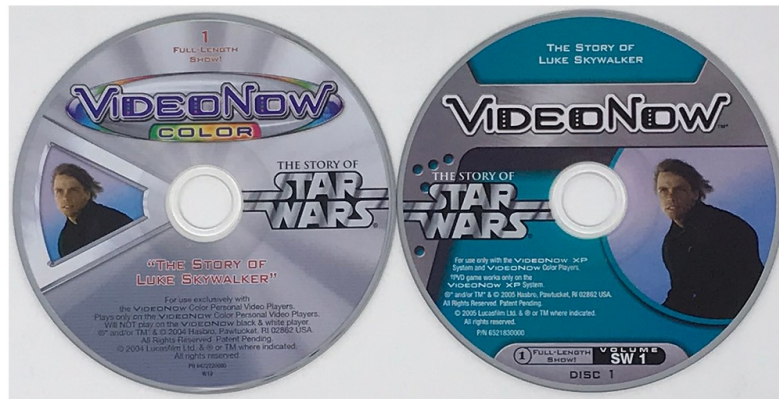
In this 2004 release, the third disc (the inaccurately-named *Behind the Scenes of Star Wars*) featured the trailer for the 2004 *Original Trilogy* DVD boxed set, a commercial for the TPM DVD release, a commercial for the AOTC DVD release, a toy commercial for Yoda and Dooku electronic lightsaber toys, then finally an advertisement for the *VideoNow* website.¹⁴⁹

In 2005, this package was re-released with an updated third disc, cover, and disc labels. The same image of Anakin, Luke, Yoda, and Vader as on the 2004 cover was expanded further to the left for this release, moving the “VideoNow” logo (sans “Color”) into a horizontal placement near the bottom. The program’s logo remained in a trapezoid, but the actual orientation of the shape was vertically flipped, and the entire logo was moved to the left side of the cover. Where the logo used to be, there was now a small area that let potential buyers know that they could “watch this PVD exclusively on VideoNow XP or VideoNow Color.” The names of the three discs were now in a navy area beneath the logo (which now included a line that read, “PVD game included!”). The entire silver color scheme was made darker (toward gray). The “SW 1” volume designation was now found on the cover twice: once at a right angle within a black region on the bottom left corner of the cover and in the top right corner within a region that also labeled this as “3 discs” and “live action.” A small region above the “VideoNow” logo proclaimed, “With updated *Episode III* footage!” At the very bottom, below the “VideoNow” logo, the product was again noted as “live action” in a green region, where smaller text also reminded potential buyers that the “PVD game works only on the VideoNow XP system.” The “VN Content” designation remained in the

¹⁴⁹ Honestly, how this counted as *Behind the Scenes of anything* is rather beyond me.

upper left corner, a rare survivor of this cover content shuffle.

Disc labels were modeled in gray and green with character images (larger this time) in a rounded area to the right of the center hole.



Label comparison: 2004 (left) vs. 2005 (right)

The content of the first two discs was identical to the 2004 release, but the *Behind the Scenes of Star Wars* disc actually lived up to its name this time. A short documentary called *Revenge of the Sith* played first. It appeared to have been built out of clips from *The Return of Darth Vader* featurette from the 2004 *Original Trilogy* DVD boxed set, along with footage from web documentaries and featurettes. One got the impression that both Hasbro and the producers of the DVD content were given the same interviews and footage, then allowed to produce content from those same sources in their own ways. It was not quite like any other version of ROTS behind-the-scenes material, yet nearly all of its footage could be identified as part of something on the DVD, the official *Star Wars* website, etc.

After the documentary, we were treated to two ROTS trailers, a trailer for the video game *Battlefront II*, the same TPM and AOTC DVD commercials as on the 2004 release, then another (different) *VideoNow* website advertisement. The disc also featured some basic “interactive content” in the form of *Star Wars* Trivia.

Given the rarity of working VideoNow XP players these days¹⁵⁰, it is perhaps worthwhile to describe exactly how this trivia game content

¹⁵⁰ I bought two that both turned out to be non-functional before finding one that was new in its original box, still sealed in plastic within... and even that one had two non-functional buttons (up and left), which made scoring any higher than 3 out of 10 on the trivia game impossible, since 5 correct answers were the top choice and 2 were the left choice.

worked. The VideoNow XP had the same four buttons as the other units along its front edge, but then it also included most of the buttons one would expect to have found on a 1980s video game controller: four buttons (up, down, left, and right) that made up a directional pad (of sorts) and two “face buttons” labeled A and B. Upon inserting the disc and hitting the play/pause button (which also turned the unit on, whereas the stop button also turned it off), the viewer was presented with two choices, selected with either A or B: “Watch Show” or “Play Game.” Clicking the latter launched the first in a series of tiny video clips that made up much of the game. That first clip showed the *Star Wars* logo (with a rather cheesy announcer stating the name aloud), followed by a title screen that read *Trivia* (with a similar cheesy announcement of the same) and directed the player to press A to start. After a brief screen of instructions, again requiring the user to press A to start, the questions began. For each, the question appeared on the screen and was read aloud. The choices then appeared on the next screen in a cross formation, each matching one of the buttons on the makeshift directional pad. Clicking a direction selected that choice, which was followed by a green “correct” or red “wrong” screen, again with the word read aloud. (Clicking A would repeat the question, while B would quit the game and return to the main menu.) Correct answers were never given on missed questions. After ten questions, which never changed or shuffled their choices due to the limitations of the technology, the player's score would be displayed with options to try again or quit. Choosing to try again would restart the loop as if the player just chose “Play Game” from the initial menu, while choosing to quit would send the user back to the screen where they would choose between “Watch Show” and “Play Game.”

The two *Story of..* videos that were identical on the first two discs of each PVD release were released the same year as the second PVD package (2005) as a Walmart and Sam's Club exclusive DVD, also entitled *The Story of Star Wars*, that was included with copies of ROTS sold in stores. This DVD is far more well-known than its PVD source and much easier on the eyes, given VideoNow's very limited resolution and frame rate of only about 15 frames per second. Upon putting the DVD into a player, the viewer was presented with a menu to choose to watch either *The Story of Anakin Skywalker* or *The Story of Luke Skywalker*. No other extras were included.

The disc was provided in a standard, black DVD case with art made of elements from other packaging, focusing primarily (from left to right) on Anakin, Luke, and Vader, with smaller elements like starfighters, Obi-Wan's hut on Tatooine, the final duel of ROTJ, and AT-ATs at the Battle of Hoth, along with the Death Star looming behind Vader and the cover's logo. A gold band at the very bottom of the cover labeled it as a “Bonus DVD.” The spine also denoted this as a “Bonus DVD” after the title. The back of

the package showed C-3PO and R2-D2 on Tatooine near Jabba's palace and brief descriptions of what was to be found in each short half of its content, albeit in original PVD order, despite the DVD (thankfully) listing Anakin and Luke's stories chronologically on the main menu. The disc label was white with an interesting design choice of C-3PO on the right and an upside-down R2-D2 on the left.¹⁵¹



The Story of Star Wars (DVD, 2005) – Walmart and Sam's Club exclusive with ROTS DVD

Perhaps the most interesting thing about this release on DVD was what was *not* included. None of the content from either version of the third PVD (*Behind the Scenes of Star Wars*) was included at all, probably because it was just a mixture of commercials, trailers, and content otherwise available elsewhere.

The label for this DVD was actually more widespread than its content, as some copies of ROTS in both 2005 (individually) and 2008 (within the *Prequel Trilogy* boxed set) incorrectly had this product's label on the ROTS bonus features disc. The latter *may* have been an error restricted to Canada, but I'm unable to confirm that, as the American and Canadian markets mingle products quite often after release.

Before we leave *The Story of Star Wars*, I should also note that, as discussed back in the chapter *Genndy Goes Micro*, one of the segments that made its way to this bonus DVD from the PVDs, *The Story of Anakin Skywalker*, actually returned to DVD as one of the items included on the

¹⁵¹ "Oh, he *excels* at that, sir!"

2006 version of the *Bonus Lightsaber Action DVD* packed in with some *Star Wars* lightsaber toys.

The Walmart and Sam's Club exclusive *The Story of Star Wars* DVD makes the rounds quite often on eBay and elsewhere, making it fairly easy to acquire. The *Bonus Lightsaber Action DVD* with *The Story of Anakin Skywalker* isn't quite as easy to find, but it can be found on eBay from time to time, even within original, sealed lightsaber toys. Adding the original PVDs to a collection is a bit trickier, given that they are far less common, but anyone who does so should definitely make a point of picking up a VideoNow player (preferably VideoNow Color FX or VideoNow XP, though anything from VideoNow Color onward should suffice for all but the second release's limited interactive content). The sheer gumption it took to release *Star Wars* content to such a limited audience on a platform with such poor video playback should be the stuff of legend (or nightmares once you try watching tiny *Star Wars* at 15 fps).

In Pursuit of the Trivial (2005)

Star Wars: The Interactive Video Board Game (or *Assault on the Death Star*, if you prefer) was not the only time *Star Wars* home video items found themselves embedded within the structure of a board game. In 2005, Parker Brothers (by then merged with Hasbro's Milton Bradley Company to become the Hasbro Games division but still producing games under the recognizable Parker Brothers brand name) released a new update of their *Star Wars* version of *Trivial Pursuit*. This new release, *Trivial Pursuit DVD: Star Wars Saga Edition*, included two DVDs that, as with other *Trivial Pursuit* DVD games, altered gameplay for acquiring colored wedges for trivia categories and answering the final game-winning question. The first disc featured a blue color scheme, while the second was yellow. Both came in a single fold-out cardboard jacket. The game as a whole came in box with the title over a primary image of Darth Vader's head with Yoda, Mace Windu, Obi-Wan, and Anakin on the left, along with Chewbacca, Leia, Han, Luke, and the first Death Star (with TIE fighters) on the right. The left edge detailed information about the product with two large DVDs (just the discs without any labels) dominating the middle of that quarter of the package.



Trivial Pursuit DVD: Star Wars Saga Edition (2005) with DVD

In this game, players would answer questions from cards as normal when on any board location other than Headquarters Spaces (i.e. where wedges were earned) or for a final question at the Hub (the center of the board). To earn a colored wedge and advance toward victory, a player would reach a Headquarters Space and then answer a video question for that category from one of twenty different question sets spread across the two DVDs (ten on each). Upon collecting wedges for all six question categories, the player would then return to the Hub to answer another question from the DVD, selected using the “For the Win” option from the DVD menu. If answered successfully, a victory video played to proclaim and congratulate the winner. The game was kept fresh by the sheer number of questions available, which the packaging described as “2,500 questions in 6 different categories with hundreds on DVD.”



Game content



Disc jacket and labels

Three versions of the game were released. The most common was a

regular, boxed version. The regular version could also be found shrink wrapped with one of the current product line's action figures.¹⁵² The figure, in its original packaging, was provided within a separate, black box that was held against the game box within the shrink wrap. The figure box would come loose after shrink wrap was removed. Several different figures could be found as pack-ins, including (but not limited to) Yoda, Darth Vader, and Commander Bacara. A yellow sticker on the shrink wrap to the upper left of the black box noted the “bonus figure” and provided an alternate barcode for scanning this item at purchase.



Trivial Pursuit DVD: Star Wars Saga Edition
(2005) with DVD and Action Figure (Yoda)

Lastly, Toys “R” Us also offered an exclusive, individually numbered, limited edition, collector’s tin version with a design that resembled the *Revenge of the Sith* toy line’s packaging. The tin came with stickers applied that allowed its title and other information to be included when on store shelves, but those stickers could then be removed so that the “clean” tin artwork could be revealed after purchase.

¹⁵² It has been suggested that these were from BJ’s Wholesale Club, but I have yet to confirm that myself.



Trivial Pursuit DVD: Star Wars Saga Edition
(2005) with DVD – Toys “R” Us exclusive



Numbered certificate



Tin with packaging stickers removed

Fans looking for this set in any form should keep in mind that, as the packaging warned, a “DVD player and TV [were] not included.”¹⁵³

Fans attending *Star Wars* Celebration III (Apr. 21 – 25, 2005) in Indianapolis, IN, had the opportunity to acquire a “Limited Edition Bonus DVD” for the game. That sounded exciting at first, but this was not actually a third disc of content for the game. Instead, it was simply a demo disc that allowed potential customers to try one question per category (without a “For the Win” question or the ability to switch question sets).

¹⁵³ That note on the packaging cracks me up every time, until I realize there might actually be people out there dumb enough to expect the game to have included a teeny, tiny television and DVD player. Then I want to weep for humanity’s future.



Trivial Pursuit Star Wars Limited Edition Bonus DVD
(DVD, 2005) – *Star Wars* Celebration III exclusive

Potential collectors should also be aware that this was the *only* time that an American *Star Wars* *Trivial Pursuit* release included home video content (e.g. DVDs). There have been several other *Star Wars* releases in the *Trivial Pursuit* library¹⁵⁴, but those have been standard board games without any home video components.



Although fun, *Star Wars* versions of *Trivial Pursuit* beyond the *Saga Edition* in 2005 did *not* include home video items. They were just regular boardgames.

¹⁵⁴ Examples that did *not* include a home video item would be the 1997 *Classic Trilogy Collector's Edition*, the 1999 *Episode I* version, and the 2016 version (part of the “Black Series” product line). A *Bite-size* version was also produced in 2005 with a similar packaging scheme to the *Saga Edition*, but it was rather tiny and did *not* include the DVDs from the other releases that year.

Meanwhile in the United Kingdom (2005 – 2006)

In the United Kingdom, a standard edition of *Trivial Pursuit DVD: Star Wars Saga Edition* was released as well. Fans in the U.S. will often run across these when searching sites like eBay for a copy of the game, so it is important to remember that since the home video content was a pair of DVDs, region *does* matter. The American game included Region 1 discs, while the UK version included Region 2 discs. Thankfully, it was rather easy to tell the difference between the U.S. and UK versions by checking the gray region on the left side of the cover, where the American version addressed the inclusion of DVDs with two large discs taking up much of that side of the package, while the UK version used a *DVD TV Games* logo, television, and several DVD control button icons.



Trivial Pursuit DVD: Star Wars Saga Edition (2005) with UK DVD



Comparison: U.S. (left) vs. UK (right) – Notice the distinctly different left sides.

The UK also had a version (or two) of the game in 2006 that did not have an American counterpart. In the UK, Parker Brothers (Hasbro) and Horn Abbot International offered the *Trivial Pursuit DVD Game: Star Wars Saga Edition* as part of its *DVD TV Games* product line. The game included

two DVDs (identical in content to those in the original 2005 version but with updated labels) and question cards, along with a pair of dice. However, it did not include a board at all. Instead, players rolled a die to determine which question they would answer from a question card (or from the questions on one of the DVDs) and worked toward winning the game without the need for a board to track any form of physical movement.

Strangely, there were two versions of this more travel-friendly release in 2006. In both cases, cards, dice, and instructions were located inside a folding interior package that was then held within a slipcover. The slipcovers on both versions were virtually identical, but one featured full color artwork (dominated by an orange logo over Darth Vader's helmet), while the other used a more muted, almost grayscale color scheme. Based on product numbers, it would seem that the color slipcover version predates the "grayscale" version, though both were apparently released in 2006.



Trivial Pursuit DVD Game: Star Wars Saga Edition (2006) with UK DVD – orange version



Trivial Pursuit DVD Game: Star Wars Saga Edition (2006) with UK DVD – grayscale version



Label comparison: 2005 (top) vs. 2006 (bottom)



Cover comparison: orange version (left) vs. grayscale version (right)



Back comparison: orange version (left) vs. grayscale version (right)



Spine comparison 1: orange version (left) vs. grayscale version (right)



Spine comparison 2: orange version (left) vs. grayscale version (right)

Meanwhile in the United Kingdom (2005)

Usually, these sidebars address a foreign version of something that the United States had in some form, even if the domestic and foreign products were quite different. This time, though, we turn our attention to a pair of items from the United Kingdom (and Australia in our next sidebar) that have never had an American equivalent.

On May 7, 2005, the Saturday edition of *The Sun* newspaper in the UK came packaged with a special *Star Wars* DVD, entitled *Heroes*. The disc, which had no menu system, played three consecutive programs. The first was a brief look at the heroes of *Episodes I – VI*, hosted by Anthony Daniels. (The program's opening included the text “In association with” and the newspaper's logo as part of the actual video content, not just something limited to a logo on disc label or packaging.) The second was the teaser trailer for *ROTS*, which was due to premiere in theaters later that month. Finally, a pair of featurettes (*This Weapon is Your Life* and *Two Worlds, One Movie*) were carried over from the official *Star Wars* website (and would

later be included on the ROTS DVD). The disc label was white with the program name, various icons (including the newspaper's logo), ROTS film logo, and official *Star Wars* website address.

This was only the first of two discs, however, and packaging reflected that reality. The jacket featured C-3PO, R2-D2, and Darth Vader on the cover, which labeled the item as a "Collector's Edition DVD" (singular) but listed the title not as *Heroes* but as *Heroes & Villains*. Opening the jacket revealed *two* disc slots, one for this disc and another for a disc that came the following day through a different newspaper.

On May 8, 2005, the second disc, entitled *Villains*, was provided to readers of the Sunday edition of the *News of the World* newspaper. This disc followed a similar pattern to *Heroes*. It started with a look at the films' villains, hosted by Anthony Daniels. It then continued with the full trailer for ROTS. It ended with another pair of official *Star Wars* website (later ROTS DVD) featurettes (*Creating General Grievous* and *One World, Two Movies*). The disc label was similar to that of *Heroes* but black this time. This disc came in a single-disc jacket, labeled appropriately as *Villains* (since that was the only disc it was meant to hold, unlike the previous day's jacket) and noted as "DVD2¹⁵⁵ of *Heroes & Villains* Collection." This jacket was meant to be discarded in favor of storing both *Heroes* and *Villains* in the *Heroes* (AKA *Heroes & Villains*) jacket, which has made it a little tougher (but not overly so) to acquire a set of both discs today with both jackets, rather than just the first jacket.

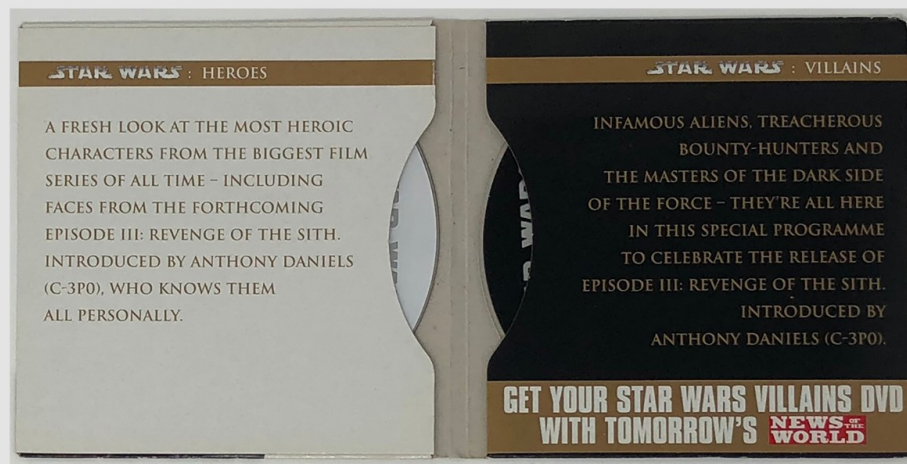
Strangely, when discussing the heroes and villains, these discs treated Palpatine and Darth Sidious as if they were different characters (or at least didn't indicate that they were the same character), hiding the most obvious reveal in the entire *Prequel Trilogy* outside of Anakin being Vader.

These discs would reappear a very short time later in Australia with a somewhat different approach...

¹⁵⁵ Yes, "DVD2" was how it was written. Perhaps that was the name of a droid who was obsessed with movies.



Heroes and *Villains* (UK DVD, 2005) – Note that even though the *Heroes* jacket could hold the *Villains* disc and thus match its *Heroes & Villains* title, the *Villains* disc was not included and had to be acquired separately through another paper.



Heroes jacket (interior) – Note the two disc slots, which allowed the addition of the *Villains* disc the next day to complete the *Heroes & Villains* package.

Meanwhile in Australia (2005)

When the *Heroes & Villains* DVDs arrived in Australia, they were again provided through two different newspapers, but given that few, if any,

Australians actually read both papers, the means of acquiring both *Heroes* and *Villains* programs was more consumer-friendly down under.

The Daily Telegraph provided its readers with an Australian version of the *Heroes* disc on Dec. 10, 2005. Content was *almost* identical to the UK version, but the opening of the *Heroes* featurette no longer included a newspaper name, and the Australian version included a menu (albeit with only one option to choose: *Heroes*). The jacket and disc label both featured artwork from the *Battlefront II* video game (leaning toward the heroic characters in this case). Notably, the jacket was only designed for this disc, rather than to package the *Heroes* and *Villains* discs together. *The Daily Telegraph* then also provided readers with an Australian version of the *Villains* disc one week later on Dec. 17, 2005. Content again mirrored the UK except the lack of the newspaper title in the opening and a single-choice menu system. The disc jacket and label also drew from *Battlefront II* as the *Heroes* disc had, but this time the image areas highlighted were of villainous characters. Thus, readers of *The Daily Telegraph* could have the full *Heroes & Villains* collection content, spread across two discs (as in the UK) in two single-disc jackets (unlike the UK).

A different newspaper, the *Sunday Herald Sun* (or perhaps more accurately the Sunday edition of the *Herald Sun*) provided its readers with just one DVD in a single-disc jacket, entitled *Heroes & Villains*. This DVD included the content of *both* of the individual *Heroes* and *Villains* discs, separated through the use of a disc menu that included both programs as options. The jacket front shared the *Battlefront II* imagery of the individual jackets from *The Daily Telegraph*, but the jacket back and disc label, rather than focusing on heroic or villainous characters, showed starfighters in combat. Thus, readers of the *Sunday Herald Sun* could have the full *Heroes & Villains* collection content in a single package (as was an option in the UK) but on a single disc (unlike the UK). In fact, they could have it *before* readers of *The Daily Telegraph*, as this single-DVD version was provided on Dec. 4, 2005, six days before readers of *The Daily Telegraph* received their first disc.

When it came to *Heroes & Villains*, distribution involved two regions, four newspapers, and three approaches for acquiring the content... and not a single American equivalent to be found. I would imagine that this may have been due to the sheer number of newspapers in the U.S., but it would've been nice if a deal to distribute these had been stuck with a publication like *USA Today* that had nationwide reach in America. Alas, it was a missed opportunity, making these fun oddities to acquire from the UK and/or Australia, even if an American NTSC player won't play these region-free, PAL discs from either market.



Left to right: *Heroes & Villains* (Australian DVD, 2005) available with the *Sunday Herald Sun*; *Heroes* (Australian DVD, 2005) available with *The Daily Telegraph*; and *Villains* (Australian DVD, 2005) also available with *The Daily Telegraph*

But, My Lord, is That... Science? (2007 – 2008)

How much of the technology seen in *Star Wars* has any basis in actual science? Could a Death Star or a lightsaber be possible? What about holographic messages? Those questions and more were answered in an hour-long History Channel special entitled *Star Wars Tech* on May 28, 2007.



Star Wars Tech (DVD, 2007 – 2008) – *Star Wars* Shop exclusive

As 2007 gave way to 2008¹⁵⁶, a DVD release of *Star Wars Tech* arrived for U.S. audiences as an exclusive through the (now-defunct) official webstore, the *Star Wars Shop* (formerly at *StarWarsShop.com*).¹⁵⁷ Cover art featured a transparent Darth Vader helmet amid blueprints with the special's logo in the upper half. A small burst of white in the bottom right proclaimed that this was “as seen on the History Channel.” The disc label used the blueprints as its background (without Vader) and split the logo to put the *Star Wars* logo above the center hole and “*Tech*” beneath.

Given the limited quantities produced and means through which to acquire one at the time, this release has often been forgotten (and then sought after) by collectors, but the product itself was less than stellar. While the special was rather interesting, the DVD release included no extras, nor any menu system of any kind. As a final blow, the program was presented in letterboxed format.

The program fared far better in 2011, 2015, and 2017 as part of *The Complete Saga's* (and *6-Movie Collection's*) ninth disc, then on the bonus features disc for ROTS in 2020.¹⁵⁸

Return of the Other Revenge (2007)

We've seen home video releases in toy aisles, on board game shelves, and more. Another rather unusual place to pick up a *Star Wars* home video item in 2007 was in stores' collections of wall calendars. In 2007, a new wall calendar for 2008 was released, labeled as *The Art of Star Wars 16-month Wall Calendar*. Aside from being a nice calendar, it included a special bonus DVD, as noted by a quarter-disc symbol in the top right of the cover that proclaimed “DVD inside” and information along the top of the cover that noted the disc's content. The DVD, which actually included a basic menu system, included 12 trailers (two per live action film) and, for the only time

¹⁵⁶ The disc was dated 2007 like the program itself, but the official *Star Wars* website news byte announcing its release through the *Star Wars Shop* was dated Jan. 8, 2008.

¹⁵⁷ This official online store for *Star Wars* goods, including exclusives, launched on Apr. 13, 2003, and closed down on July 18, 2011, a mere two days after its closing was announced on the official *Star Wars* website.

¹⁵⁸ See the chapters *The Lucas Films in HD* in *Volume I* and the chapters *Enter: Disney* and *All Together Now* in *Volume II* for more information on these releases.

outside of the *Clone Wars*, Vol. 2 DVD release, the *LEGO Star Wars: Revenge of the Brick* animated short.



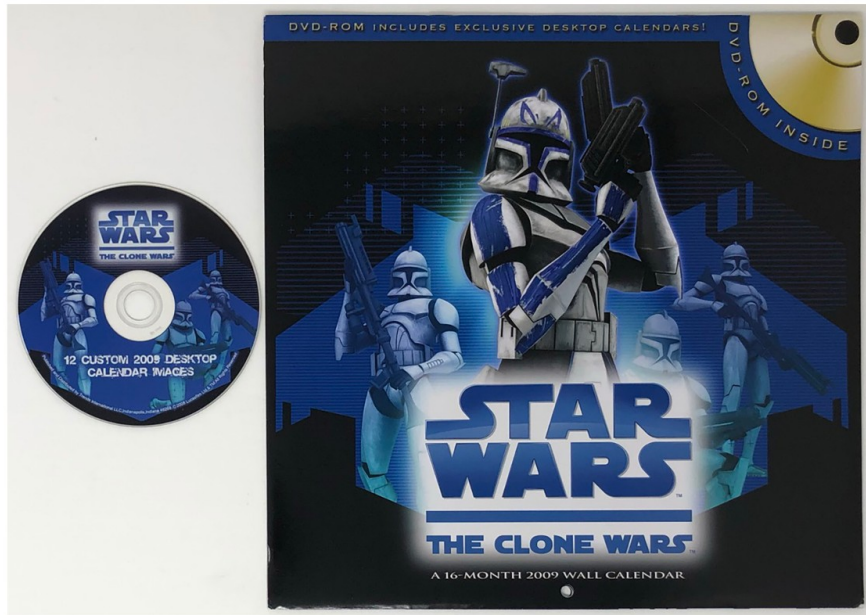
The Art of Star Wars 16-month 2008 Wall Calendar (2007) with bonus DVD

The calendar itself was somewhat misleading, but not about the disc. The content of the DVD was noted at the top: “Bonus material includes 12 original movie trailers and the *LEGO Star Wars: Revenge of the Brick* mini-movie.” Below that, that, the background was essentially red-orange art against black that resembled blueprints or a display. Over that background, three columns covered portions with other artwork: Vader, Palpatine, the second Death Star, TIE fighters, and Mustafar in the left column; Luke, Chewbacca, Han, and Leia in the middle column; and C-3PO, R2-D2, stormtroopers, a Royal Guard, the second Death Star (again), and TIE fighters (again) in the right column. At the bottom, below a large title for the calendar, a series of 11 smaller images formed a row of various artwork, including some from movie posters. *None* of the artwork from the cover, including the 11 images at the bottom, actually appeared inside the calendar! To see the actual interior artwork, one had to check the back of the calendar, which revealed all 13 art pieces. Wait, did I just say 13? Isn’t this a 16-month calendar? Yes, there were only 13 images. Four of the months (Sept. – Dec. 2007) were combined onto one calendar page with a single piece of artwork.

The DVD, meanwhile, was kept safe in a paper sleeve with a clear

window (similar to the way *Forces of Destiny, Vol. 1* was provided with the 2017 Walmart exclusive reissues¹⁵⁹), which was adhered to a thick piece of cardboard (the same dimensions as the calendar) and slipped into the center fold of the calendar. The disc's label was an ugly background of black and the odd red-orange patterns from the calendar's cover with the *Star Wars* logo and a description of content above the center hole. Below the hole, the disc bore the logo of Hyperspace: The Official *Star Wars* Fan Club with the web address of the official *Star Wars* website.¹⁶⁰

I should note, just so that it does not confuse anyone, that 2008 saw the release of another 16-month wall calendar for 2009, based on *The Clone Wars*, which also included a DVD. However, the DVD for that later calendar was a DVD-ROM (i.e. data, not video), which included desktop calendar files. It was *not* a home video item like the previous year.



Star Wars: The Clone Wars 16-month 2009 Wall Calendar (2008) – Note that this calendar's disc was a DVD-ROM (i.e. data) disc, *not* a video DVD and therefore *not* a home video item. This has led to some confusion for collectors in the years since.

¹⁵⁹ See the chapter *Enter: Disney* in *Volume II*.

¹⁶⁰ In June 2003, the official *Star Wars* website launched an array of paid content through a subscription called “Hyperspace.” In 2004, the Official *Star Wars* Fan Club merged with this subscription service. That incarnation of a physical/digital *Star Wars* membership with exclusive content was discontinued in 2011.

This has caused some confusion in the intervening years, as collectors have discovered the earlier calendar and then picked up the later one expecting similar content. To be fair, though, the text on the TCW calendar's cover, including next to the quarter-disc image in the top right corner, all said "DVD-ROM," not "DVD" this time. It *should* have been clear, but many collectors (myself included) purchased it just to be sure.¹⁶¹

Rebel, Let's Go!¹⁶² (2014)

One area of products not generally within the scope of this guide is *Star Wars* parodies. In general, *Star Wars* parodies tend to be outside of the scope of official *Star Wars* releases, even if they are legitimate, legal releases from their respective companies, such as in the case of *Spaceballs*, or even those with Lucasfilm's tacit approval (e.g. *Robot Chicken: Star Wars* or the *Family Guy* parody trilogy).

This gray area starts to shift a bit out of focus when the release in question is from the parent company of the franchise and promoted not so much as a parody than as a sort of "crossover" (albeit not in the traditional sense). That was the case when Disney Channel premiered *Phineas and Ferb: Star Wars* on July 26, 2014.¹⁶³ This was a retelling of *A New Hope* in an hour-long format (double the length of a typical episode of *Phineas and Ferb*) that took hefty liberties with the content to make it work with characters from the cartoon and five (often catchy) musical numbers (e.g. "In the Empire," "Rebel, Let's Go!").

On Nov. 11, 2014, the special received a Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment DVD release (though, unfortunately, given its musical content, not a Blu-ray) in a standard DVD case with a cardboard slipcover. The initial run of this release included a "Perry-in-Carbonite" keychain. On the disc itself, one found that the value proposition here was increased by including not just small extras but more episodes of the regular *Phineas and Ferb* series: "For Your Ice Only/Happy New Year!;" "Steampunk/It's no Picnic;" "Terrifying Tri-State Trilogy of Terror (Parts 1 and 2);" "Doof 101/Father's Day;" and "Tales from the Resistance (Parts 1 and 2)."¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ Now, hopefully, you won't have to.

¹⁶² Aaaaaaand now that song is back in my head.

¹⁶³ Disney XD aired the special for that channel's first time on Aug. 4, 2014.

¹⁶⁴ No, not *that* Resistance.



Phineas and Ferb: Star Wars (DVD, 2014)

The slipcover and case used artwork similar to a poster promoting the special for Disney Channel and Disney XD. However, character positions were rearranged. For the DVD release, the special's logo was in the center with Phineas and Candace Flynn (in their *Star Wars* roles) below, Ferb Fletcher (as Darth Ferb) to the right, and the unlikely duo of Perry the Platypus (as Perry the Rebelpus, as he has been dubbed) and Heinz Doofenschmirtz (as Heinz Darthenschmirtz) above the logo. The disc label was standardized, "Disney DVD" gray. The special included Disney Movie Rewards points, which came on a standardized code slip that proclaimed (above the program's logo, code, and Mickey Mouse's hand reaching out toward a computer mouse), "Disney movie magic: one code unlocks it all."

This was a relatively strong release for a single TV special, thanks to the added content and pack-in physical bonus, though given that it was released in 2014, the lack of a Blu-ray option was bothersome.



Keychain

For a More Digital Age (2013 – 2015)

Since *Phineas and Ferb: Star Wars* aired when the regular series was still ongoing, the iTunes release of the special was not treated as a separate product but instead included in *Phineas and Ferb, Vol. 10*, a “season pass” that included episodes that were individually released Oct. 11, 2013 – Nov. 9, 2015.

The special joined the Disney+ streaming library on Feb. 28, 2020.

For Your Consideration... (1990 – 2010)¹⁶⁵

Another area of home video collecting that can be intriguing is screeners or “screener copies.” This is also an area of collecting that can very quickly seem to turn into quicksand, as trying to obtain a complete set of *Star Wars* screeners is probably a nigh-impossible feat.

A screener is a copy of a movie, television episode, or other video content that is sent out for review or promotional purposes. Often this is to gain attention in hopes of garnering an Academy Award, an Emmy, or other accolade. Screeners are also sometimes sent to stores to preview potential merchandise that the sender hopes they will carry on their shelves. Other times, a screener might be sent out to reviewers so that a product can

¹⁶⁵ This is the date range for the examples included here. Screeners go back further than 1990 and are still produced today.

have reviews already available either before or at launch.¹⁶⁶

Screeners are a bit of a thorny topic in collecting, similar to how advance copies (often uncorrected proofs) of books are to *Star Wars* novel collectors. Approaches taken by companies sending out screeners vary, but in general there is typically an expectation that a screener will not leave the original recipient's possession or be used by that recipient (or someone acquiring it secondhand) to provide illegal, bootleg copies of the content (e.g. downloads from BitTorrent and similar clients). Usually, these are productions that will be released on the retail home video market, so after a brief period of needing to make sure bootlegs aren't copied from screeners so as not to undermine sales, screeners are usually just abandoned in the hands of whomever received them. The companies that sent them out essentially stop caring (or thinking) about the screeners, except in cases where it is clear that someone used a screener copy to rip and upload an illegal copy of the film online (or for physical sale, though that is more common in other international markets than in America). A while after the retail release of whatever the screener was promoting, they often begin appearing on sites like eBay, mostly ignored by the companies now that superior, retail copies exist and the idea of screeners as a source of bootlegs has mostly ceased being a concern. (Bootlegs themselves are still an issue, of course, but at that point, the most common bootleg source would be the retail releases, not inferior screeners.)

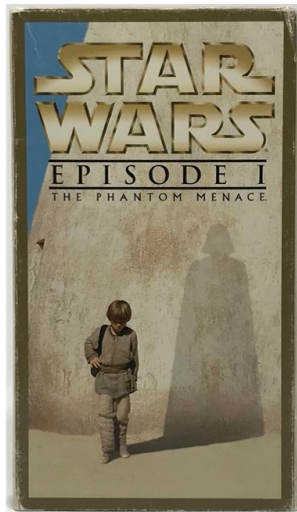
In order to avoid bootlegged copies, many screeners include a copyright notice of some kind overlaid upon the picture for some or all of the content's runtime. In recent years, screeners have also been individually numbered and/or watermarked on the video in ways that the naked eye cannot detect. That way, if a bootleg copy is discovered, the company can trace it back to the original source copy and recipient if they are so inclined. As a more simplistic method of avoiding bootlegging, most screeners today (i.e. in the era of HD and Ultra HD) are provided only on DVD (i.e. substandard SD quality compared to most later retail releases) or via some form of streaming or download with DRM (digital rights management, similar to iTunes locking your downloaded music to only play on your Apple ID's devices).

The result of all of these factors is that screeners are relatively rare, often

¹⁶⁶ This is similar to book companies sending out review copies of new *Star Wars* books (or audiobooks) before or at launch. I've had the pleasure of reviewing items from Del Rey, Disney Lucasfilm Press, and Wizards of the Coast, though it appears to be exponentially more difficult to get onto such a list for video products.

substandard when compared to retail releases, and tracked (at least in more recent years) primarily to avoid illegal content piracy. That makes them a strange subcategory of *Star Wars* home video collecting, to say the least. This section is thus not intended to be an exhaustive list of *Star Wars* screeners but instead an exploration into their various forms.

The most basic form of screener is simply a copy of the production itself without any extra promotional materials. For example, a widescreen VHS screener of TPM was produced in 2000, but it was just the film, making it substandard when compared to the retail cassette in the *Widescreen Video Collector's Edition* in America, which included the *Filmmaking Has Turned a Corner* featurette. It was most notable for its alternate packaging (using the version A poster artwork) and label.

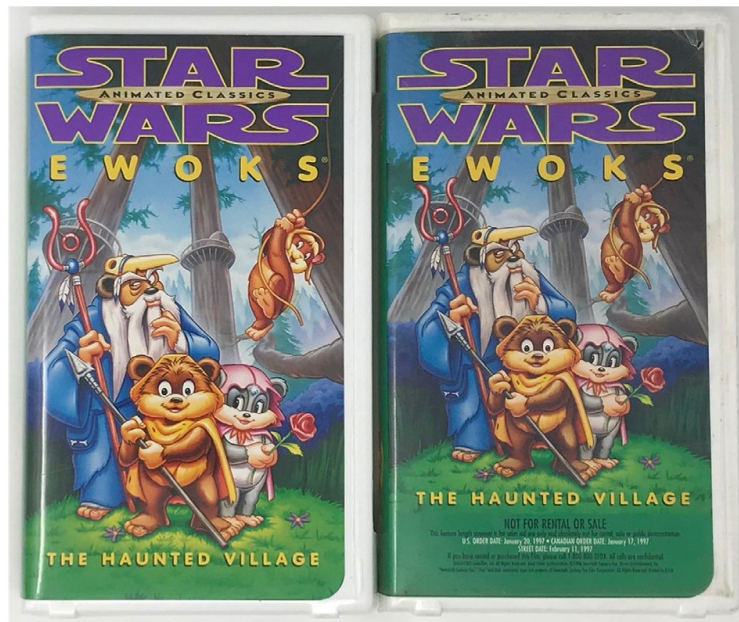


TPM screener (VHS, 2000)

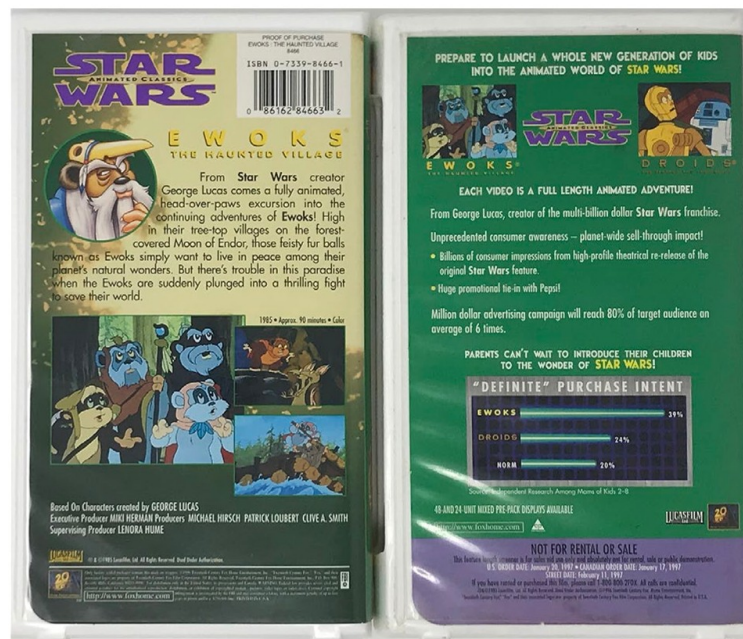


Label

A similar “just the movie” screener four years earlier provides us with a glimpse at another purpose for screeners: to convince a store to carry a product. In 1996 (one year before the retail release), a VHS screener for the *Star Wars Animated Classics* release *Evoks: The Haunted Village* was provided to some stores to promote the upcoming product. Dubbed a “Preview Videocassette” on its label, the cassette was packaged in a clamshell case that was similar from the front and spine to the retail version in 1997 but subtly altered. The back was entirely changed to focus on essentially making an argument for why a store should carry the retail release the following year.



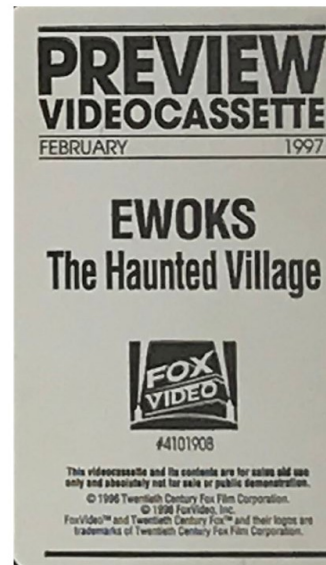
Star Wars Animated Classics: Ewoks: The Haunted Village (VHS)
Left to right: retail release (1997); screener (1996)



Back comparison: retail release (left) vs. screener (right)



Spine comparison:
retail (left) vs. screener (right)

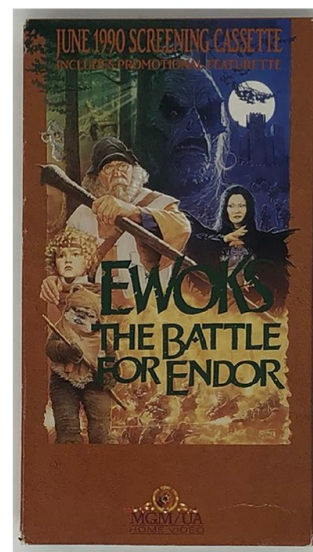


Screener label

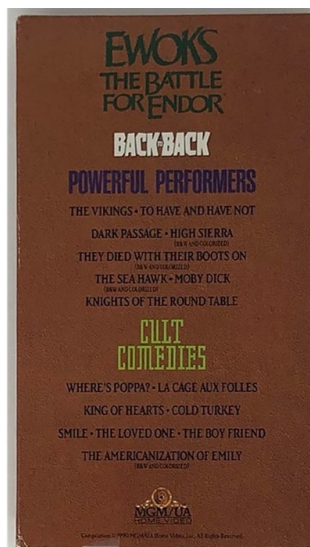
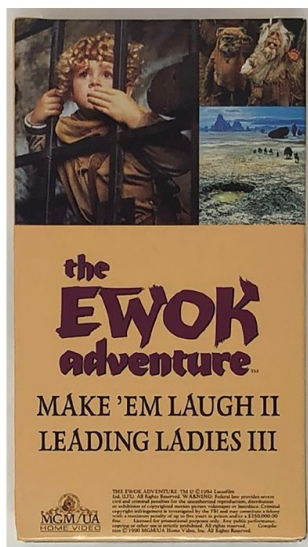
Another Ewok-related product line illustrates a variation on this approach. Rather than including all of the relevant information to promote a product on its screener packaging, sometimes the VHS cassette would include a sort of advertising featurette that discussed the content, any relevant cross-promotions, pricing, etc. These were designed to be watched by store owners, not the public. Such full-length film screeners with promotional featurettes were produced for both Ewok telemovies shortly before their retail VHS release in 1990. They are most recognizable from the front based on information at the top that labels them as “screening cassettes” and highlights how they included promotional featurettes.



The Ewok Adventure screener
(VHS, 1990)



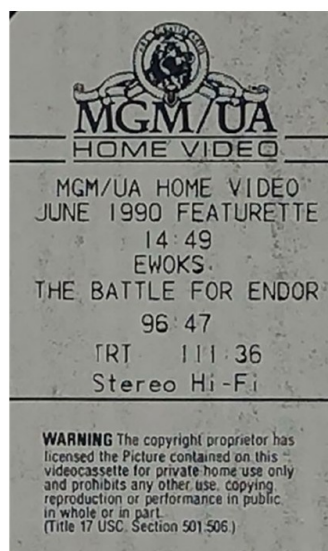
Ewoks: The Battle for Endor screener
(VHS, 1990)



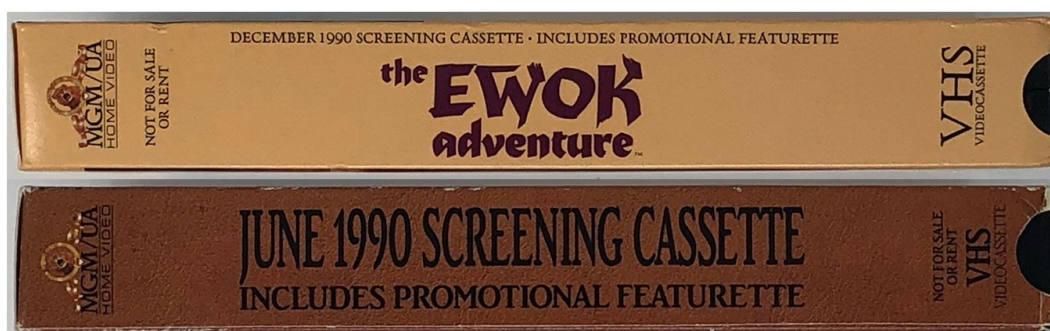
The back of each cover for this pair of screeners noted the other product lines they promoted as part of a trailer-esque portion of their promotional featurettes.



The Ewok Adventure label



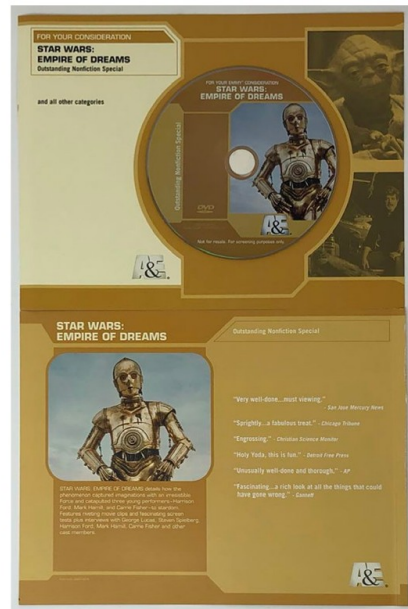
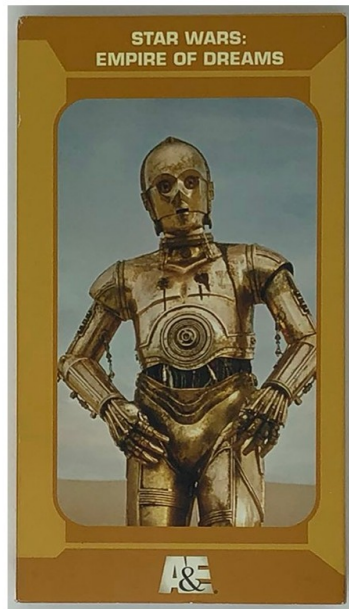
The Battle for Endor label



These screeners were also recognizable from their case spine labeling.

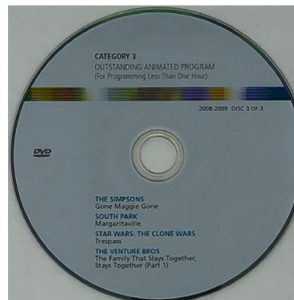
A Saga on Home Video: A Fan's Guide to U.S. *Star Wars* Home Video Releases

Rarely, one might find a screener provided in multiple formats, often when the dominant form of media is shifting from one format to another, as was the case with *Empire of Dreams* in 2005, which received both VHS and DVD screeners. Each was bare-bones, but one should note that these included the otherwise unreleased A&T television edit of the documentary, rather than the version found on the 2004 *Original Trilogy* DVD set's bonus features disc or later on Disney+. The VHS version came in its own slipcover, while the DVD was attached to a page (as part of a two-page spread) that was found in a larger container of A&E screeners.



Empire of Dreams screener (VHS, 2005) *Empire of Dreams* screener (DVD, 2005)

The DVD screener for *Empire of Dreams* and the fact that it was part of a much larger album of screeners for the A&E Network is also a good reminder that screeners can come packaged together for various reasons.



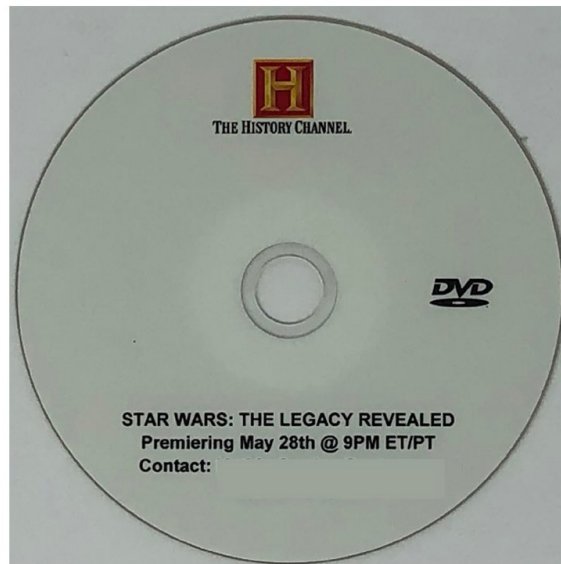
Examples: 61st and 62nd Primetime Emmy Awards screener packages for animated categories – The former included “Trespass,” while the latter included “Lethal Trackdown.” Each episode was on just one disc of several in each package.

For example, screeners for shows under consideration for Emmy

Awards in animation categories were often packaged together to be sent out for consideration. Some of these included episodes of *The Clone Wars* and *Star Wars* parodies like those produced for the *Family Guy* and *Robot Chicken* franchises.

Multiple versions of a screener might exist when there are different target audiences, rather than different formats as with *Empire of Dreams*. For example, History Channel's excellent *Star Wars: The Legacy Revealed* documentary received no fewer than four different screener versions (and, sadly, no retail release). These are a great case study in screeners, as they also reveal other frequent screener practices beyond just their different target audiences.

One screener for *The Legacy Revealed* was provided to *Star Wars* fan websites (including my own) in 2007 to promote the special before its airing on May 28 of that year. As with many screeners, these were produced in fairly limited numbers and therefore were not mass produced, standard DVDs but instead internally-produced DVD-R discs. Even more interesting is that these were not the finished version of the special. Instead, they bore some unfinished scenes, runtime displayed on the screen, and used a placeholder narrator instead of the final narrator, Robert Clotworthy. Yes, screeners are often produced far enough in advance of a production's airing or release that "rough cuts" or "unfinished cuts" are what find themselves on screener copies, similar to "uncorrected proofs" of novels being sent to book reviewers.



The Legacy Revealed fan site screener (DVD-R, 2007)

A rather elaborate screener, using the same unfinished version of the special, also existed. This was a standard DVD (not a DVD-R) with identical content to the fan site screener, but this time its label featured the

special's logo, the Luke Skywalker vs. Darth Vader duel from ROTJ, the special's airdate, and the History Channel logo. A second disc (a CD-ROM) was an "Art Disk" [sic] with still images for promoting the special. The discs were kept within a white, trapezoidal "booklet" (for lack of a better word) that had spiral-bound pages inside to highlight aspects of the special and the saga's pop cultural impact. This booklet/folder was then held inside a black cardboard container (unfortunately easily damaged due to a lot of empty space inside to allow crushing) with a magnetic flap of Vader's helmet to keep it closed. Also inside was a tee-shirt featuring one of Ralph McQuarrie's early concept art pieces, featuring Luke with his lightsaber over the *Star Wars* logo with Darth Vader looming large behind him. It is unclear whom the audience was for this elaborate, yet still unfinished, screener of the special.

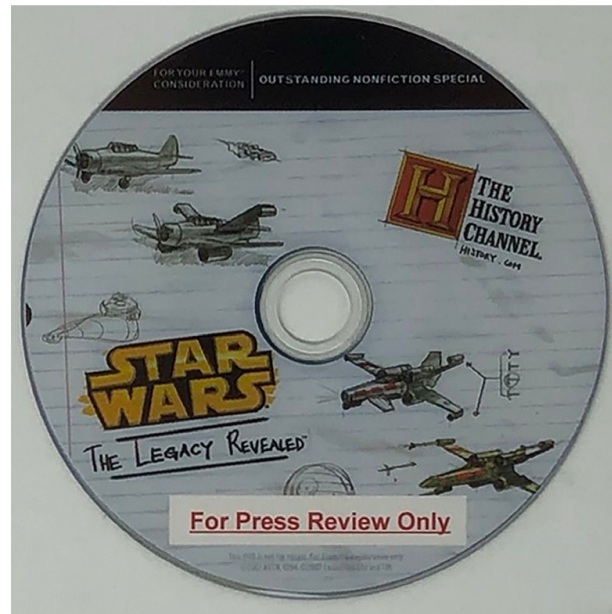


The Legacy Revealed Emmy screener (DVD, CD-ROM, 2007)

On the other hand, finished versions of the special found their way to both those considering who might win an Emmy Award and to the entertainment press. While the disc labels and content were very similar, the Emmy Award version was mass produced and held within its own jacket and envelope for mailing, while the press version was produced in-house and was a simple DVD-R disc.



The Legacy Revealed Emmy screener (DVD, 2007)

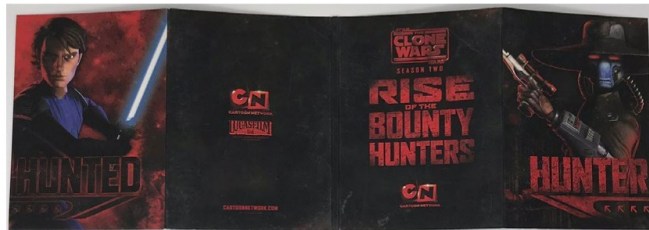


The Legacy Revealed press screener (DVD, 2007)

Four different audiences, standard and DVD-R, different labels, and different packaging: *The Legacy Revealed*'s screeners seem to have had it all. That is small comfort, though, to those who have been pining for a true retail release of the special. This has made the screener versions some of the most frequently sought for the saga.

Including other assets like pictures or text alongside video screeners, such as those found in the more elaborate *The Legacy Revealed* screener, has been relatively common practice. It is more a question of *how* those will be included than *if* in many cases.

For example, for the first two seasons of *The Clone Wars*, screeners were provided with an episode or two of the show on DVD-R, while other assets were provided through data on a CD-R.



The Clone Wars: Season 2: Rise of the Bounty Hunters screener (DVD-R, CD-R, 2009) – exterior



Interior



Disc labels: DVD-R (left) and CD-R (right)

However, by the time the third season came around, that practice changed to something cheaper to produce. Episodes were still provided on DVD-R, but other assets were uploaded to a website, the address and password for which were provided on the disc label and packaging. This was the case for at least the third and fourth seasons of TCW.



The Clone Wars: Season 3: Secrets Revealed screener (DVD-R, 2010)



Interior – Notice only one disc slot and “blacked out” area on the right side for website address and password.¹⁶⁷

Finally, a screener for the first season of *The Clone Wars* provides a great example of when studios try to go the extra mile (or maybe parsec) to attract attention to their production. In 2008, some television stations received an elaborate screener for the first season of TCW. The screener came in a rather large, white package, emblazoned with the Jedi Order

¹⁶⁷ Yes, I removed that information. I doubt anyone would care about sharing that information these days, but I’d rather be respectful of the original content creators.

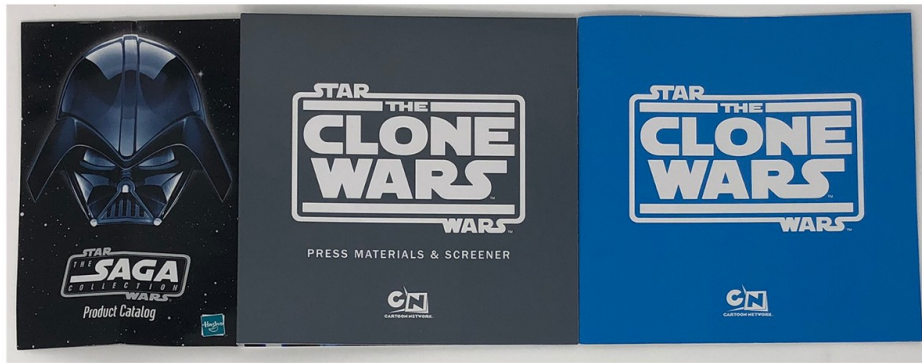
symbol. Inside, the recipient would find a DVD-R screener, a CD-R of press materials, a booklet, an advertising flyer... and a Hasbro electronic lightsaber toy (of the variety with a telescoping blade)! Granted, the lightsaber itself was not exclusive, but to include it at all has made this screener package quite a find for collectors. That said, the lightsaber chosen didn't make much sense, as it was Obi-Wan's lightsaber from *The Phantom Menace*, which he lost prior to the cartoon series. It would have made much more sense to have included the one released in the 2005 product line to promote ROTS, which would've matched the screener's content.



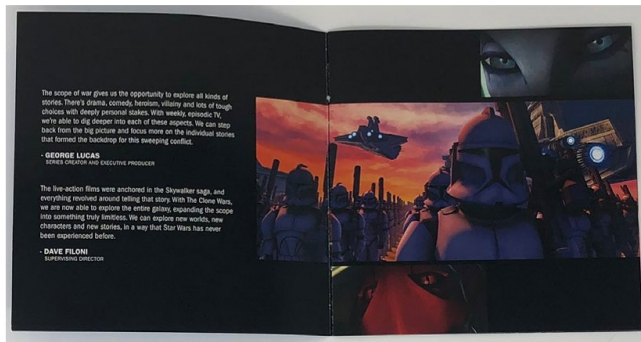
The Clone Wars: Season One screener (DVD-R, CD-R, 2008) – container



Open container (advertising flyer hidden beneath the booklet)



Left to right: advertising flyer; disc jacket; and booklet



Booklet (first page of interior)



Lightsaber toy (extended)



Discs within jacket – CD-R (left) and DVD-R (right)

Whether unfinished, bare-bones, or flashy, with or without multimedia for reviewers, for award or store consideration, screeners are an interesting and eclectic little niche of *Star Wars* home video collecting. Unfortunately, they are, by definition, rare, and distribution is more controlled now than ever, given the demand for bootleg physical and digital copies of films in the months before official home video releases. Snagging one of these is a nice moment for a collector, but making these the focus of a collection would likely drive a completist to drink. Heavily.

The Marketing Jedi (1997)

A similar concept to screeners is the promotional tool known as the press kit and its later incarnation, the electronic press kit (EPK). Modern press kits are often digital-only, but in previous eras, press kits were provided through physical media. Many of those in the 21st century have been data CD and DVDs, rather than home video items, but the latter years of the 20th century, particularly the 1990s, brought such press kits on magnetic tape formats.

For example, in early 1997, an audio visual press kit was provided to outlets in an effort to promote the *Special Editions* in theaters. Like many such press kit cassettes, it included trailers, interview clips, and some random “B-roll” (footage to be used as the reporter saw fit, such as airing as the reporter’s own narration played over it). What’s interesting for home video collectors is that this press kit found its way to at least two formats, one very familiar and another briefly mentioned back in *Volume I*.

The 1997 *Special Edition* press kit was provided on VHS and U-matic. The latter was a form of cassette developed by Sony that used 19 mm magnetic tape. It predated Beta by four years.¹⁶⁸ Significantly larger than VHS (7.38 x 4.06 in. for VHS vs. 8.63 x 5.44 in. for U-matic), it makes an unusual item in *Star Wars* home video collections alongside its VHS counterpart.



Special Edition Trilogy Audio Visual Press Kit (1997) case comparison – VHS (left) vs. U-matic (right)



Cassette comparison – U-matic (top) vs. VHS (bottom)

¹⁶⁸ In fact, Beta exists because U-matic did not gain a foothold in American homes, leading Sony to try again.

Discarded Yet Collectible (1982, 1999)

Also related to the idea of visual press kits, which are often used internally within the media industry, is the subject of items originally intended for what appears to be internal use that were eventually discarded and found their way onto the secondary market for collectors. Examples would include two items in my own collection, one of which was a Beta cassette full of trailers that included one for ROTJ marked as *Revenge* (not *Return*) of the *Jedi*, and a VHS cassette from Skywalker Sound with both theatrical trailers for TPM, each in two different aspect ratios.



CFI trailer cassette including
Revenge of the Jedi trailer (Beta, 1982)



Skywalker Sound
TPM trailer cassette
(VHS, 1999)

This would also include items used for training employees on *Star Wars* promotions that were later discarded, such as the Video8 Pizza Hut training video we examined back in *Volume I* and a VHS training video for a Frito Lay promotion for Memorial Day 2005.



Pizza Hut training video cassette
(Video8, 1999)



Frito Lay training video cassette
(VHS, 2005)

Items like these add credence to the adage that one company's trash can be a collector's curious acquisition years later.

Conclusion: It's a Strange Galaxy

This chapter is not designed to be exhaustive. Unusual items are, by their very nature, somewhat elusive at times. Thus, the entries in this chapter present many items beyond the typical film, TV series, or even behind-the-scenes releases that might spark your interest or expand the scope of your collection. If it has, then I suppose my work for this chapter is done.

Really, though, if you go out and actually hunt down PVDs, I should just drop the mic right here. I will have achieved a *Star Wars* miracle.

19 THIS IS THE WAY¹⁶⁹

I did not set out to be an expert on American *Star Wars* home video releases, nor did I really set out to be a collector. Both “just sort of happened” as I became more and more interested in developing the small number of items I owned into a larger library. That said, I came into this without a collector’s mindset at first. It was something I had to develop over time. Along the way, I had to learn to weave my way through the home video secondary market, keep an eye on (and budget for) new releases, and pinpoint holes in my library. I would like to think that personal experience has provided me with some insights that could be of use to new collectors and those ramping up to expand into new formats of *Star Wars* subject matter.

This chapter is designed to provide some tips that may help you in building your own *Star Wars* home video library.

Your Focus Determines Your Parameters.

You should probably decide early what you intend to actually collect, especially if you have the mindset of a completist. You can always change your mind later, but try to start with an initial goal in mind that you can meet before moving on to a larger collection.

For example, I began my actual “collecting” by looking at what I already owned, which tended to be a few CEDs (acquired by chance years earlier

¹⁶⁹ “We roll, we roll!” I can’t hear the Mando mantra without thinking of Hammer. Imagine Hammer with Mando gear! Please, Hammer, don’t hurt ‘em!

without even really knowing what they were), boxed *Original Trilogy* VHS and DVD sets, and single releases of the *Prequel Trilogy* on VHS and DVD. I had also picked up most of the Blu-ray releases up to that point. I therefore decided that it made the most sense to start by hunting down missing VHS, DVD, and Blu-ray releases, since I already had at least a few of each. I also decided that since I was more interested in *Star Wars* stories than behind-the-scenes materials, I'd first focus on the films and televised fiction.

I am a firm believer in the psychological aspects of what financial guru and radio show host Dave Ramsey refers to as the “Debt Snowball.” He talks about how you should pay off small debts first, then apply the money you would have spent on those debts (if possible) to the next largest debts. Part of the reason he suggests going from smallest to largest, rather than based on payment schedules or from largest to smallest, is because paying off a small debt provides a sense of accomplishment and motivation to then tackle the next challenge. In education we also see that small victories make a huge difference in managing longer-term goals. The same can be said for collecting. If your eventual goal is to own *everything*, start with smaller, specific areas of collecting that you can complete much sooner in order to build momentum and a sense of accomplishment that will help keep your collecting spirit strong.

Again, you can always change your mind later.

What is “Complete?”

What is a “complete” set of something to you? That sounds like a ridiculous question, right? You may be shouting at this page, “*Complete* means everything, you dolt!” I would argue that definitions of “complete” vary, just as other parameters of a collection do, by the individual collector.

Let's take *Star Wars* comic book collecting as an example. For some, having a complete *Star Wars* comic book collection means literally everything ever produced: all different formats; every printing; every variant cover; and even perhaps from every different part of the world. Others may choose only products from the United States. Some might prefer one format over another, such as trade paperbacks or collected editions over single issues. When I collected physical *Star Wars* comics, I tended to prefer “first format” collecting for comics, so I picked up a single issue if that was how it was first released, preferably but not absolutely a first printing, and I tended to disregard variant covers because I cared about the story, not which version of the cover I owned. Each approach necessitates a different condition to be met in order to have a “complete” collection.

The same goes for home video collecting. For you, maybe “complete” means one of each version (cut) of a film, so you definitely want a copy of the 2004 DVD versions of the *Original Trilogy*, but you don't need to purchase every reissue of those same discs as long as you have the release

you prefer. Someone else might want one of everything but not care about store exclusive pack-in content like the comics included with the 2006 *Original Trilogy* DVDs from Walmart.

What constitutes a “complete” collection is entirely up to how *you* define *your* collection.



Will you collect foreign editions? What about in languages you don't speak? Example: Spanish-language ANH, TESB, and ROTJ (Mexican VHS, 1995)¹⁷⁰



What about copies in a language you don't speak that are still from your country? Example: American, Spanish-subtitled *THX Remastered Edition* full screen boxed set (VHS, 1995)

¹⁷⁰ Yes, we saw these in the chapter *The Original... One Last Time* in *Volume I*.



What about foreign editions with bilingual packaging?
Example: *The Prequel Trilogy* (Canadian DVD, 2008) with English/French packaging



What about copies that are designed to meet the needs of the visually-impaired?
Example: American DVS (Descriptive Video Service) ANH (VHS, 1995)



What about items promoting releases like pins?
Examples: 1997 *Special Edition* (left) and 1999 TPM (right) promotional pins

A Saga on Home Video: A Fan's Guide to U.S. *Star Wars* Home Video Releases



What about items that aren't home video releases but resemble them?
Example: Walmart exclusive Funko *Star Wars* shirts in VHS-style packaging (2019)
Top row: package fronts. Second row: spines; backs. Third row: shirt designs.



Example: In 2020, items from the *Star Wars* Celebration that was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic were released for sale online. These included a set of three hardback notebooks, each resembling a VHS cassette, which were placed within slipcovers designed to resemble 1980s VHS/Beta cassette cases.



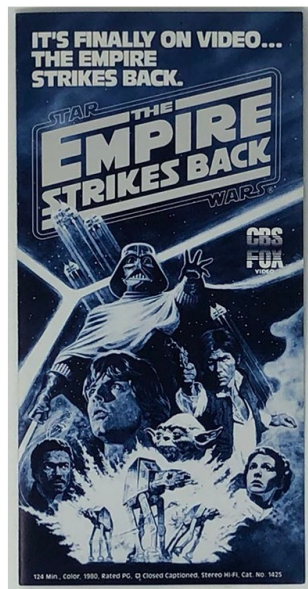
Example: “VHS Journals” resembling VHS clamshell cases

A Saga on Home Video: A Fan's Guide to U.S. *Star Wars* Home Video Releases



How nitpicky will you get with variants? What if the only difference is a sticker on the slipcover?

Some recent films (e.g. *Rogue One* and *The Last Jedi*) have borne different stickers on their slipcovers when sold at Walmart due to Walmart (at the time) owning Vudu and wanting to promote their digital copy platform instead of being platform agnostic or promoting *Movies Anywhere*.



What about preorder pamphlets and cards?

Examples: TESB preorder pamphlet (1984) and multi-chain “gift card” acquired upon placing a \$5.00 deposit on a preorder for TPM on VHS (2000)



What about “dummy cases” used for promotional purposes in video stores?
Examples: UK TPM VHS (left); U.S. AOTC VHS/DVD (right)



What about retail store promotional display items that actually played video clips?
Example: Walmart *Millennium Falcon* display that played a toy commercial (2014)



What about signed items (with or without certificates of authenticity)?
Examples: *The Original Trilogy* (Blu-ray, DVD, 2013) signed by actor Billy Dee Williams (left); *LEGO Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Out* (DVD, 2013) signed by voice actors Sam Witwer and Tom Kane (right).



What about press kits to promote home video items?
Examples: *The Original Trilogy* (2004) and ROTS (2005) press kits – Note that the DVDs included were DVD-ROM discs of promo content, not video DVDs.



What about related franchises like *Indiana Jones*¹⁷¹ or *Willow*¹⁷²?
Example: Several *Willow* items on VHS, Beta, LaserDisc, DVD, and Blu-ray

What condition(s) will you accept?

A related area of consideration is deciding what condition you will accept for items you add to your collection. Some collectors tend to prefer items that are still in their original, sealed packaging, and they like to keep their collection that way. Others lean toward sealed items to make sure the items will be complete but then open them once acquired. Some, like me,

¹⁷¹ The best known *Indiana Jones* crossover with *Star Wars* is the *Star Wars Tales* story *Into the Unknown*, which saw Han Solo and Chewbacca experience a hyperspace mishap that sent them to Earth, where the *Millennium Falcon* crashed, only to be discovered 126 years later by Henry Jones, Jr. (AKA “Indiana” Jones), while Chewbacca observed as a sort of Bigfoot-esque character. This was an “Infinities” tale (i.e. not in-continuity with Legends or the new canon).

¹⁷² For April Fool’s Day 2006, the official *Star Wars* website posted Databank entries that folded Willow Ufgood (AKA Thorn Drumheller) and other characters from *Willow* and its spinoff novels by George Lucas and Chris Claremont (*The Shadow War Chronicles*) into the *Star Wars* universe on the planet Andowyne. In doing so, Willow/Thorn was merged with Warwick Davis’ character Weasel from the TPM podrace sequence. Alas, since this was just an April Fool’s Day joke, it was not considered in-continuity for Legends or the later canon, but it cemented the connection between *Willow* and *Star Wars* in the minds of many fans.

want items that are complete and as nice as possible, but since we will open the items anyway, acquiring them sealed is not necessary. It all depends on your own collecting preferences.

A particularly touchy area within this subject (aside from the constant sealed vs. open debate) is that of former rental copies. Items that were previously rental copies were often altered by the video rental outlets that originally owned them. In the case of DVDs, that often meant the original case being swapped out for a more durable one. For most formats, it meant labels or other markings on packaging, the actual media (cassettes, discs, etc.), or both. For VHS and Beta, this alteration was taken to an extreme, however. Video rental businesses often sliced the cardboard cases of U.S. VHS and Beta releases apart, so that usually only the front, back, and left side were kept intact, so that those cases could instead act as a cover insert (i.e. front, back, and spine) for a much hardier clamshell case. The top and other side of the original case were simply discarded (as was the bottom in the rare cases of retail releases that loaded from the side instead of the bottom). As such, many VHS and Beta collectors consider former rental copies in this form to be “butchered.” For many collectors, the disdain for this practice and the resultant condition of such items causes them to eschew them entirely. Others tend to lean toward them only in cases where an item is rare enough that finding an “intact” copy will be so difficult or time-consuming that having a “butchered” version is better than not having a copy at all. For an apparent minority of collectors, these altered former rental copies are considered entirely acceptable. It is all up to your personal preference.



Classic Creatures: Return of the Jedi (VHS, 1985) – “butchered” former rental copy

As always, *you* get to decide what goes into *your* collection. Personally, I lean toward getting something in “butchered” form only as a stopgap until a

better copy is available, but the operative word in this sentence is *personally*. You and I (in fact, you and any other collector) need not agree on what we want to collect, and, contrary to the prevailing wisdom of social media, preferring different things is okay!

When Opportunity Knocks, Answer!

Regardless of how you define your collection or collecting goals, you could very well change your mind or redefine your collecting boundaries in the future. I would suggest that if you happen to run across a great deal on something that doesn't quite fit into your collection, go ahead and pick it up anyway if you can afford it. You never know when you might later decide to collect that type of product and start kicking yourself for not taking advantage of the opportunity at the time.

For me, that was the Super 8 reels. I did not really bother collecting them for a long time, but when I found the original black and white, soundless reel, I went ahead and picked it up. Years later, I was glad that I did because it was one less thing to find when I started to actually collect those Super 8 reels.

If nothing else, picking up something you might want later and then deciding that you definitely do *not* want it as part of your collection will give you something that you can eventually sell or trade.

Know Your Limits.

The most difficult thing for many collectors, especially completists, is to know when to *stop*. We have to know when to walk away from a potential purchase. We must remember that this is a *hobby*, not an occupation, nor a true necessity, though it may certainly feel like either of the latter sometimes. If a new purchase would place you in a difficult financial situation, it is best to walk away and simply wait for another day when circumstances might permit picking up that item for your collection.

The same can also be said for space considerations. If you consider your collection something you want to display or enjoy regularly, you probably won't want to have to tuck items away in some form of storage where they cannot be easily accessed or displayed. Sometimes, you just reach the point where you have too much for your allotted space. Does that mean you should stop collecting? For some people, it might. For others, it becomes a matter of getting creative with their physical space. Regardless, this is a *hobby*. If you find it making your physical surroundings difficult to manage, it may be time to slow down or stop buying new items until physical space ceases to be an issue.

Budget, Budget, Budget!

Maybe this is the Economics teacher in me coming out, but I tend to be

concerned (at times overly so) with keeping track of what funds our household has coming in and going out. I tend to use a computer budgeting program to track income, real spending, and projected spending for a month or two at a time, always keeping track of how much money, if any, will be in (or owed on) our accounts by the end of a given month.

You may track your spending less closely than I would, or you may “give every dollar a name” in the fashion of aforementioned financial radio show host Dave Ramsey, but regardless of how detailed your approach, I would highly suggest considering upcoming purchases as items to add to your monthly budget.

For chance finds on eBay and other secondhand means, this may be too difficult to actually project, but it is relatively easy to account for *new* releases, since the internet allows for easy checks of pricing and availability for new items. Personally, if I know that there is a new release coming soon, I often preorder the item, and I input the info for that transaction into my budget as a future expense immediately. That way, I know that the cost has been accounted for in advance, and I will not find myself scrambling to make sure I have the funds when the release date finally arrives.

For example, when *LEGO Star Wars: The Freemaker Adventures: Complete Season One* went up for preorder on Amazon in Sept. 2016 for eventual release on Dec. 6, 2016, I put in a preorder for the DVD and Blu-ray sets immediately, already accounting for that \$50 or so as a future expense, so that as soon as my budgeting started looking ahead to Dec., I knew the funds would already be there.

This is arguably much easier to do if your pay is consistent, either through a salary instead of hourly wages or a stable number of working hours from week to week or month to month. Even a small amount of preparation can help avoid moments when you have to scrounge for funds for a new release or face looking forward to something only to be unable to make the purchase when the time comes.

Don't Expect Prices to Drop.

Prices on used or out-of-print items can vary wildly once those items are out of the hands of their original retailers.¹⁷³ As much as we may sometimes balk at initial retail prices (the MSRP, or Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Price) for new releases, it is often a good call to pick up a release at launch or shortly thereafter by looking for the best deal available for a new copy

¹⁷³ The Economics teacher in me is screaming, “Supply and demand! Equilibrium! Market fluctuations!”

from a credible retailer. Waiting on prices to drop or expecting to be able to pick up items months or years later through a means like eBay is sometimes a worthwhile gamble, but other times collectors find themselves burned by their caution.

Star Wars items tend to leave print fairly often, meaning that only existing inventory will still be available in stores and no longer be replaced. Often this happens when a new product is released that supersedes the previous version, such as the 2015 *The Complete Saga* replacing the 2011 version, or the 2011 Blu-rays replacing the 2008 DVD boxed sets. As a result, some products become available mostly on the secondary market, where prices can spike depending on the remaining demand for those items. This is perhaps even more important to consider today, given Disney's propensity for releasing films on home video for a while and then putting them "in the vault" without any new releases for that film for years at a time.

This dovetails nicely into the next piece of advice, which is...

If People Aren't Buying Something, Get It Now!

Tying into the idea of items going out of print and seeing prices spike on the secondary market is the notion that some releases get very little attention and are picked up in lesser amounts than others.

For example, when the 2004 *Original Trilogy* DVD boxed sets were released, fans flocked to purchase them. As a result, far fewer consumers bothered to pick up the 2005 reissue of the films in new DVD boxed sets. Fans saw it as "double-dipping" and derided how the new set did not include the bonus disc from the previous year. Why buy something you already own, especially when the new product is seen as a downgrade from what you already have?

The result was that for a long while, the 2005 DVD sets were selling for much higher prices than the superior 2004 DVD sets on eBay and through Amazon Marketplace sellers. The same was the case with fans buying the 2006 "limited edition" individual releases of the *Original Trilogy* with the "unaltered" films as bonus discs. So many fans picked them up in 2006 that far fewer picked up the 2008 boxed sets that reissued the same discs. As a result, the 2008 boxed sets once fetched ridiculous prices on eBay. Fewer retail buyers means fewer copies available secondhand later, and low supply always (all else being equal¹⁷⁴) brings higher prices.

If you can get that neglected item while it is on store shelves, do so.

¹⁷⁴ The Econ teacher in me is screaming, "*Ceteris paribus*, baby!"

Your wallet will thank you later, either by saving you money from not having to buy the item at a higher price or by giving you something you no longer desire for your collection that *you* can sell later for higher than you bought it for at launch. Either way, you win.

Search eBay Periodically.

eBay is a great place to acquire out-of-print *Star Wars* titles and sometimes even newer titles at a discount (assuming the factors mentioned in the last piece of advice are not in play). It pays to hop onto eBay every so often and just do a general search and skim listings to see what you might turn up. A search like “*Star Wars* LaserDisc Japan” or “*Star Wars* DVD” will often generate a large number of results, but skimming at least the first few pages might net you an intriguing find. It is all about timing and luck.

As an example, in 2015 I contributed to a book of essays on *Star Wars* film and television series called *A Long Time Ago: Exploring the Star Wars Cinematic Universe*. When it arrived, I was reading the other contributors' essays one night when I reached a great one by Jean-Francois Boivin on the *Ewoks* and *Droids* cartoons. On a whim, I did a quick eBay search for one of my home video collecting holy grails, the UK VHS releases of the series. When I did a quick search for “*Ewoks* VHS UK,” I was pleasantly surprised (okay, utterly shocked) to find someone selling all six retail VHS cassettes in a single auction, along with *Droids: The Great Heep*, for a price that was right at the edge of what I could justify paying for them. I immediately purchased the set, adding something to my collection that I had never truly believed I would ever acquire.

Even if you are not looking for something specific, just pop onto the site every once in a while and do a quick general search. You will be amazed sometimes at what you find that you think surely wouldn't be so easy to acquire.

If you *do* know exactly what you are looking for, you can make use of eBay's saved searches feature, which allows you to search once and then mark those search criteria to be notified when new items are listed that match those criteria. It adds a level of convenience for those willing to keep up with notifications that appear via email, the eBay app, etc.

Look for Real Pictures, Not Stock Images.

Many sites, such as eBay and Amazon Marketplace, allow sellers to enter a product's barcode number to have a standardized image automatically added to that listing. Such a picture is known as a “stock image.” They can certainly help identify a product if accurate, but with some releases sharing barcodes with earlier releases, items being repackaged, etc., stock images are not always useful for collectors.

In general, it is usually best to seek out sellers who are showing actual

images of the products. That allows you to confirm that it is indeed the item you want, while also seeing the condition of the product, rather than relying on a written description of its condition. I consider this a matter of the buyer doing their due diligence, and if a seller is unwilling or unable to show a picture of the actual item upon request, I'd personally avoid that seller and seek the item elsewhere if possible.

Know What Exists... and What Doesn't.

One major pitfall that plagues new, enthusiastic *Star Wars* home video collectors is the issue of bootlegs. Unofficial, illegal copies of *Star Wars* material have proliferated over the years, and the problem has only gotten worse in the current era, thanks to modern bootleggers becoming more sophisticated.

Gone are the days when most bootlegs were obvious due to idiotic “errors” like covers proclaiming the *Star Wars* film in question to star Arnold Schwarzenegger. Bootleggers can now create *very* convincing items that often fool the uninformed.¹⁷⁵

One of the most prominent examples in the last decade was the supposed 2015 *The Complete Saga* DVD set that was found frequently being sold on eBay or Amazon Marketplace. No such set existed officially, but a lack of understanding about the *real* 2015 reissue of *The Complete Saga* Blu-ray set provided an opportunity for bootleggers to create something that *looked* like a DVD counterpart to that set but was in no way legitimate. As mentioned back in *The Lucas Films in HD*, this particular bootleg set usually included either old stock (sometimes) or bootleg copies (usually) of the two-disc DVDs from 2001, 2002, 2005, and 2006. Even then, many fans were fooled into thinking that the set was legitimate, since the disc labels recreated the look of those earlier, official DVD releases so well (albeit sometimes a bit darker than legitimate disc labels). One often had to put the discs into a computer's DVD drive and check the discs' content size to confirm that these were bootlegs, rather than the real deal.¹⁷⁶ (Even when

¹⁷⁵ Fellow collector Lloyd Hendricks acquired a bootleg DVD of TESB that advertised an interview with “Ben Butt.” Not Burt. Butt. I don't even want to know what kind of sounds that guy was mixing into the film!

¹⁷⁶ Bootleg DVDs are often single-layer discs, whereas legitimate DVDs are usually dual-layer discs. This means that content that would usually be well over 5 GB in size on a legitimate disc will often, by necessity, be compressed to less than a single-layer DVD's maximum 4.7 GB for a bootleg. (This helps keep the bootlegger's production costs down and profits up, since it is cheaper and faster to produce a

the discs were legitimate old stock, though, they were still not the 2011 Blu-ray versions of the films on DVD that they would have been for a legitimate 2015 release.¹⁷⁷)



The bootleg “DVD version” of the 2011 *The Complete Saga* reissue (which did *not* exist officially) looked real from the outside. However, it contained bootleg, single-layer copies of the 2001 – 2006 DVDs (or, rarely, actual old stock from those releases). Any legitimate DVD release in 2015 would have included the 2011 cuts on DVD like those in the Blu-ray/DVD combo packs back in 2013.

Unfortunately, the ease of engaging in internet commerce with other individuals rather than businesses has only made this problem worse. Many fans inadvertently purchase such bootlegs through what they think are legitimate sites like Amazon without bothering to ever understand the difference between, for instance, Amazon proper and Amazon Marketplace, the latter of which is a Wild West of mostly unpoliced products sold by individual Amazon users with the same danger of bootleg purchasing as on eBay. As a rule of thumb, when shopping on Amazon, look for items that are listed as both sold *and* shipped by Amazon. If sold and shipped by a different source or sold by a different source and shipped from an Amazon warehouse holding their goods, you run the risk of a bootleg because that is *not* Amazon providing an item from their own legitimate stock. Be wary, or as Ronald Reagan advised, “trust but verify.”

Unfortunately, such vigilance will only go so far when browsing for home video items on Amazon. In 2019, a fellow member of the *Star Wars*

single-layer DVD than a dual-layer disc.)

¹⁷⁷ The only ways those cuts have ever existed on DVD thus far in the U.S. are in the 2013 Blu-ray/DVD combo packs, the reissues thereof as Walmart exclusives in 2017, and the first Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment DVD releases in 2019. That version was also used for the ANH *Navajo Language Edition*.

Home Video Facebook group discovered what appeared to be a new reissue of the *Ewok Adventures* double-feature DVD, which had become somewhat pricey on the secondary market due to no longer being in print, having been released fifteen years earlier. The listing looked legitimate. It was both shipped and sold by Amazon. Surely it was the real thing, and it was just released with no fanfare, right?

I decided to investigate for myself before fellow members of the group started placing orders. Upon arrival, it became clear what this was, and it was rather devious. Someone had used Amazon's self-publishing suite (either CreateSpace or Kindle Direct Publishing) to duplicate the case insert (albeit zoomed in just a little too much) and the content of both sides of that 2004 official DVD release, then set up a "print-on-demand," single-layer, two-disc DVD set (with a pair of poorly Photoshopped labels). They were then able to sell that print-on-demand bootleg on Amazon via CreateSpace or Kindle Direct Publishing without the telltale indicator of being sold by someone other than Amazon because all self-published titles on Amazon's platform are listed as being shipped and sold by Amazon. Thus, the bootlegger was able to sell bargain-priced bootlegs that many would think were legitimate and take advantage of the high demand for that out-of-print legitimate release.¹⁷⁸

The best way to avoid being swindled by a bootlegger is to educate yourself on what products *do* legitimately exist. For example, any fan aware that there was no such thing as a 2015 *The Complete Saga* DVD set would easily be able to recognize 2015 – 2020's most common *Star Wars* bootleg as illegitimate, even if unable to differentiate an individual Amazon Marketplace seller from actual Amazon.

¹⁷⁸ To add insult to injury for those seeking legitimate releases, I actually wrote a detailed review of the product for Amazon that described exactly what it was and how you could tell that it was a bootleg. Since that review was about the product being illegitimate instead of about the content of the *Ewoks* telemovies, Amazon refused to publish that review, claiming it didn't meet their review guidelines.

A Saga on Home Video: A Fan’s Guide to U.S. *Star Wars* Home Video Releases



The bootleg “Amazon” (i.e. print-on-demand) version of the 2004 *Ewok Adventures* DVD release. The barcodes on the discs, barcode on the packaging, case insert cropping, and – obviously – the fact that the specials were on two different discs with their own labels were the dead giveaways that this was not legitimate.



Prior to 2015, the most common bootlegs that looked like they could be legitimate were the DVDs that purported to be the *Special Edition* films as part of 20th Century Fox’s “Five Star Collection” product line. Many were fooled, despite the obvious fact that the 1997 version of the films had never been released on DVD. Packaging was also obviously incorrect with ROTJ artwork used for TESB and the cover of the young reader book *The Glove of Darth Vader* on the back of ANH.



In more recent years, the lack of an American VHS release of ROTS led to nice fan-made recreations of what might have been, but such fan creations were not any more legitimate than fan creations to simulate VHS releases of Disney era films. (Creators of these fan-made covers typically did *not* purport them to be anything legitimate, though some fans purchased ROTS, falsely *believing* it to be real.)

In today's market, where we can all benefit from engaging in buying and selling through great venues like eBay and Amazon Marketplace, we must be vigilant so as not to be taken advantage of by those abusing the opportunities those sites afford.

But, hey, this is nothing new. Only the platform has changed. As the ancient Romans once put it, *caveat emptor*. "Buyer beware."

Be Aware of International Options.

If you intend for your collection to include foreign releases, be sure to educate yourself on your options when it comes to buying from legitimate foreign sellers so that you can compare those options to domestic sources. Sometimes, you will find that security and value can often come with being willing to step outside of your comfort zone and region.

For example, when I discovered the MovieNEX *Premium Limited Box Edition* of *The Force Awakens*, it was after its initial release. I just happened to stumble across one on eBay, educated myself about it, and picked it up through that same eBay listing. I even ended up getting a bit of a bargain.

When *Rogue One* finally came around, I made a point of seeking out a way to preorder the similar, premium MovieNEX release for that film. At the time I was hunting, the item had popped up on eBay in a few presale listings, all of which were over \$200. (A couple were also from somewhat questionable sources with little guarantee that I would not be inadvertently buying a bootleg.) A friend suggested that I simply check out Amazon's Japanese site. I had used the American and UK Amazon sites, but I was wary of buying through a site in Japan because I simply hadn't tried to

before and am entirely unfamiliar with the Japanese language.

I educated myself about the Japanese Amazon site, got some good advice on how to correctly set up an account, and in less than an hour, I had preordered that “fancy schmancy” *Rogue One* set at a price about \$100 less than those eBay listings, through a company that I could trust to do right by its international customers.

Ordering from Japan was outside my comfort zone, and I had little idea what to expect, but by being willing to go to the original source country for my purchase, I saved nearly half of what I would have spent otherwise.

Even more importantly, this can open up options that are otherwise unavailable entirely. For example, while the U.S. did not have *any* releases of *The Last Jedi*, *Solo*, or *The Rise of Skywalker* on Blu-ray 3D, other regions did. Being willing to import a copy from the United Kingdom, Japan, or elsewhere became the only way to get a Blu-ray 3D release of those films, thankfully on region-free discs (or Region A in the case of Japan).

In some cases, you might also find that “group buys” or brokers are necessary to acquire foreign market releases that are not otherwise available to typical American buyers. For example, I have consistently relied on brokers in acquiring the Chinese Blufans exclusive *One Click* sets.

That said, ordering from international sellers also means becoming aware of shipping costs and times, which can sometimes be too high or too long, respectively, for a collector's tastes. That will be up to your own preferences, but I would argue that it is always better to know one's options and dismiss the ones we are not comfortable with than to go with a default choice that is less beneficial simply because we are afraid to reach out of our comfort zones.¹⁷⁹

Network With Other Collectors.

One final piece of advice here is often overlooked. In our busy everyday lives, collecting often becomes a solitary pursuit, something we do when we happen to have time, mainly through online purchases from trusted websites or faceless individual sellers. We forget sometimes that there are other people out there like us, who enjoy collecting the same things we do.

At times, yes, these other collectors may be competitors for that last copy of something on eBay, but more often than not, fellow collectors can

¹⁷⁹ That said, your experience with foreign markets will vary. I have had great experiences buying from Japan, the United Kingdom, South Korea, Australia, and even Turkey, but I have consistently had bad luck with sellers from the Russian Federation.

be a great resource (or crowd source) to answer questions, confirm information, find items you need that are just sitting in someone else's collection as unwanted spare copies, and so on. Communities like Justin Berger's *Star Wars* Home Video group on Facebook (just search "*Star Wars* Home Video") are great places to gather online with like-minded collectors to build collections and a sense of community. Especially as we get older and find ourselves often defined by our fandom but not necessarily surrounded by others with the same pursuits where we live, it is important to remember that we are not alone in our love of *Star Wars* home video collecting and to make a point of reaching out to interact with others who have similar interests.

As Maz Kanata said, often "the belonging you seek is not behind you. It is ahead." All you need to do is seek it out.

Conclusion: No "Right" Way to Collect

When it comes down to it, there is no "right" way to collect *Star Wars* home video. Your collection will be what you make it, defined by your interests, your financial means, your persistence, and, yes, sometimes just your luck.

People like me, fellow collectors, can only provide advice and information to help you make informed decisions as you build your own collections.

AFTERWORD: INTO THE UNKNOWN

As this guide is being finalized in Nov. 2021, the future of physical *Star Wars* home video releases is uncertain.

To be clear, the future of *Star Wars* viewing at home is perhaps more promising than ever, though like any grand plan that is announced years in advance, not everything that has been announced is actually coming to fruition.

On Dec. 10, 2020, the Walt Disney Company Investor Day event brought *huge* news for fans of *Star Wars* on the small screen (or, more specifically, those subscribing to Disney+). *The Mandalorian* would return for a third season (originally suggested to premiere in Dec. 2021 but now aiming for 2022). Two spinoffs from *The Mandalorian* were announced: *Rangers of the New Republic* (believed to have been meant to include Cara Dune in a major role) and *Ahsoka* (starring Rosario Dawson as Ahsoka Tano, as seen in the second season of *The Mandalorian*). Both new, live action series would be helmed by Dave Filoni and Jon Favreau. While *Ahsoka* is still in the cards, *Rangers of the New Republic* has been canceled as of May 2021, possibly owing to controversial comments by Gina Carano that led to Disney effectively cutting ties with the Cara Dune actress. Meanwhile, a third spinoff, *The Book of Boba Fett*, was announced by a post-credits scene after *The Mandalorian*'s season two finale, "The Rescue," on Dec. 18. It is set to premiere on Dec. 29, 2021, shortly after this guide goes to print.

Outside of *The Mandalorian*'s corner of the galaxy far, far away, other live action projects were announced at the 2020 Investor Day event. We learned that a *Lando* series was in the works, though without word on who would be playing the iconic scoundrel. A new series called *Acolyte* would take place

in the High Republic era, the setting for a major crossover event within the comics (from Marvel, IDW, and Viz Media), *Star Wars Insider* magazine, and books (from Del Rey and Disney Lucasfilm Press).

A new *Rogue Squadron* film was announced, which would be helmed by Patty Jenkins (perhaps best known to fans at the time for her work on the *Wonder Woman* films for Warner Bros.' DC Extended Universe film franchise¹⁸⁰). By the end of 2021, however, Jenkins' film was off the production schedule, ostensibly due to scheduling conflicts. (This was not the first time a *Star Wars* film that had been in the works was dropped or at least put on the back burner. *Game of Thrones* television show creators David Benioff and D.B. Weiss had been slated to helm a trilogy that was dropped back in late 2019.) A film by Taika Waititi and a trilogy by Rian Johnson were confirmed as still in the works as of late 2020.

Two live action projects that were already known at the time were promoted at the event and remain on track for 2022: *Andor* (based on Cassian Andor from *Rogue One*, again played by Diego Luna) and *Obi-Wan Kenobi* (which has brought back both Ewan McGregor and Hayden Christensen).

Animated fare was also a focus of Investor Day 2020. The first trailer for *The Bad Batch*¹⁸¹, a spinoff of *The Clone Wars* set during the Imperial era, was released. The series premiered as planned on May 4, 2021, and a second season is set to follow in 2022. A series of short anime episodes, *Visions*, was also announced at the event and saw release on Sept. 22, 2021. An animated film, *A Droid Story*, was announced, but little is known about that project, even nearly a year later.

These announcements provided plenty of reasons to be excited about the future of *Star Wars* on Disney+, and even with a few setbacks to the expansive menu of content highlighted at that Dec. 2020 event, the future of streaming *Star Wars* content looks quite promising, even when just considering 2022 alone.

In the year since the deluge of Investor Day 2020 announcements and hype, other productions have also joined the *Star Wars* streaming library that had not been expected, including items like *LEGO Star Wars: Terrifying Tales*, *Biomes*, *Under the Helmet: The Legacy of Boba Fett*, and the like. One could argue that we are not just seeing a wealth of new content but perhaps even

¹⁸⁰ The director of *Wonder Woman*? Awesome! Wait, the director of *Wonder Woman 1984*? Oh, dank farrik!

¹⁸¹ See the chapter *Empire of Streams*.

nearing *Star Wars* overload (or perhaps oversaturation) when it comes to *streaming* material.

But what about on *physical* home media?

To date, *none* of the original *Star Wars* content produced for Disney+ has seen any form of physical media release whatsoever, nor have they been made available for purchase through digital platforms. That is to be expected, at least in the short run, given that the major draw of most paid streaming services is their exclusive content. However, many shows that began life as streaming service exclusives, such as Netflix's *House of Cards* and *Stranger Things* or *Star Trek: Discovery* from Paramount+ (formerly CBS All Access) have found their way to physical media eventually, often just in time to help promote a subsequent season's streaming launch. Indeed, *The Clone Wars: The Lost Missions*, originally a Netflix exclusive, reached Blu-ray and DVD (at least in the United States) several months after its streaming premiere.

Recent years, though, have shown that while, as *Star Wars* constantly tells us in the Disney era, hope is certainly important, we should perhaps temper our hopes with a healthy dose of realism. The most recent two *Star Wars* television series releases on physical home media were the first season of *Resistance* and second season of *LEGO Star Wars: The Freemaker Adventures*. Both were only released on DVD, despite HD having long been the standard and Ultra HD steadily gaining market share. The second season of *Resistance* has not been released on physical media at all, and it wasn't even a streaming service exclusive like *The Mandalorian*, *The Bad Batch*, or *Visions*.

Moreover, Disney's other flagship franchise, the Marvel Cinematic Universe, has ceased releasing any of its many television series (broadcast or streaming) on physical home media at all, leaving the latter seasons of *Daredevil*, *Jessica Jones*, *Luke Cage*, *Agent Carter*, and *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* absent from the American market, along with all of *Iron Fist*, *The Defenders*, *The Punisher*, *Inhumans*, *Cloak and Dagger*, *Runaways*, *Helstrom*, and newer fare like *M.O.D.O.K.* and *Hit-Monkey*.¹⁸² These were a mixture of Netflix, Hulu, Freeform (formerly ABC Family), and ABC series, so they *might* have received poorer treatment than we will eventually see with their Disney+ MCU offerings¹⁸³ (i.e. *WandaVision*, *The Falcon and the Winter Soldier*, *Loki*,

¹⁸² The first season of *Iron Fist*, second season of *Agent Carter*, and a few more seasons of *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* did see release in Europe.

¹⁸³ These are all new enough that the lack of a home video release could just be a matter of timing, not a decision not to release them at all. Time will tell.

What If...?, et al), but between this record of MCU television series neglect and recent patterns with *Star Wars* series releases (and lack thereof), there is real, valid concern in the *Star Wars* home video collecting community about what the future holds (or, worse yet, doesn't hold) for the many new and current *Star Wars* series streaming into our homes.

2019's replacement of the 2015 digital versions of Lucas' live action films and the subsequent tweaking of *The Mandalorian* episodes after release to remove errors have made fans wary of a digital-only media environment. While I would argue that we are not yet on the cusp of a purely digital media market, bereft of physical releases entirely, the entertainment landscape *is* changing.

Just as physical media must compete with digital, home media has long been the bane of theaters. The narrower the gap between theatrical and home releases, the less necessary the often inconvenient theatrical experience has become. When theaters worldwide began closing during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, changes already taking place in the market accelerated. Suddenly, major studios began releasing their movies, including those originally intended as theatrical blockbusters, through their own streaming services instead (e.g. *Mulan* on Disney+) or day-and-date with theatrical releases in the few places where theaters were actually open (e.g. *Wonder Woman 1984* on HBO Max). The gap between theatrical and home viewing was reduced to *zero*, and the theatrical viewing option did not even exist in many cases. It remains to be seen whether this pandemic-driven "new normal" will be a lasting change or just a temporary adaptation to turbulent times, but the likelihood that things will fully reset back to a pre-pandemic *status quo* is low. Even now, as theaters have begun to reopen, the result is a mixture of streaming releases of theatrical films (e.g. *The Suicide Squad* and *Dune* on HBO Max) and a return to theatrical-only releases (e.g. the MCU's *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings* and *Eternals*). A recent lawsuit between Scarlett Johansson (who plays Natasha "Black Widow" Romanov) and Disney over the simultaneous theatrical and Disney+ release (at extra cost) of the *Black Widow* MCU film has only heightened tensions in the film industry. As ever, the market will decide.

All of this points to an era in which *Star Wars* content thrives *digitally*, but the prospect of physical releases remains uncertain. Collectors face questions that have been considered for over a decade but which have taken on new urgency. Can one truly "collect" digital content? What if the content in question is not available for purchase but instead part of a streaming library to which one must subscribe? If a content provider can change or remove content at their discretion, with or without the consent of the customer, what does that mean for the very concept of collecting, even if we assume digital content can be collected at all?

Not all change is negative, of course. Could any of us have imagined just

a decade ago that we would witness the launch of so many new *Star Wars* television series, or that *Star Wars* films would return to the big screen for *five* more films in just five years, when each previous trilogy had taken six years for just three films?

In effect, we live in a period that promises great things for fans of *Star Wars* video productions but not necessarily for those who collect them physically. We, as fans and home video collectors, need to be ready for the possibility that the *Star Wars* home video library, at least in terms of the physical goodies we so love acquiring, may cease expanding (or something near to that effect) in the years to come. Does that mean we will stop collecting? For some, it might. For others, it will provide an opportunity to circle back to pick up releases missed along the way without the ever-present vigilance for new releases that has defined most of our days as collectors.

It is an era of change, whether we welcome it or seek to hold it off as long as possible. As Shmi once told Anakin, "You can't stop change, any more than you can stop the suns from setting." She was right, but so was Luke when he reminded us that "no one's ever really gone."

This collecting community will continue to exist long after the last physical release of a *Star Wars* production disappears from store shelves. That kind of passion and the connections made between fellow fans will not fade easily. It has been my privilege to be part of the *Star Wars* home video collecting community, and it is my hope that you too have the fortune to find friends and fellowship among likeminded collectors.

The Force *will* be with the home video viewers.

Always.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Nathan P. Butler is the author of several fiction works, including tales in his own universes, novellas for Decipher's *WARS* franchise, short stories for Jim Wylder's *10,000 Dawns* universe, and, most notably for *Star Wars* fans, the short *Star Wars* comic story "Equals and Opposites" for *Star Wars Tales*. (A Hasbro Comic Pack was later based on his *Star Wars Tales* story, making him the proud "storytelling papa" of a pair of action figures). He was also a contributor of dates for dated battle maps in Jason Fry and Dan Wallace's *Star Wars: The Essential Atlas* (in which he was able to officially set the Legends continuity's digital calendar start date for *Return of the Jedi*, 39:3:3). He has also contributed to non-fiction works on science fiction subjects in the pages of several Sequart essay collections and elsewhere.

In *Star Wars* fandom, he was one of the earliest *Star Wars* podcasters (2002 – 2020) and the creator/compiler of the *Star Wars* chronology project now known as *The Star Wars Timeline Gold* (1997 – 2018). He wrote and co-produced the first serious *Star Wars* fan-made audio drama released online (*Second Strike*, 2002 – 2003). Today, he produces content on Patreon and YouTube, including the series that gave birth to this book, the ongoing *From the Star Wars Home Video Library*.

By day, he is a professional social studies (history, economics, etc.) educator, having taught for over twelve years in a traditional high school classroom before becoming the first full-time social studies educator for his county's innovative online program, where he has (since Jan. 2015) led a growing social studies team, teaching students in grades six through twelve.

Originally from Evansville, IN, Butler now resides in the Atlanta metro area with his amazing fellow-fan wife Jodi (see the Introduction), his fan-in-training son Cade (yes, named after Cade Skywalker), and their cat. He can usually be found working in service to his students in his *Star Wars*-themed office in the Butler home, while Cade plays alongside him.

ALSO BY NATHAN P. BUTLER

Original Universes

Greater Good (novel)

Echoes (novella)

(available together in *Greater Good and Echoes*)

WARS Novellas

WARS: The Battle of Phobos: Healers and Hunters (*Earthers*, Vol. 1)

(collected in *WARS: The Battle of Phobos: Preludes*)

WARS: The Battle of Phobos: On Red Soil (*Earthers*, Vol. 2)

(collected in *WARS: The Battle of Phobos: Stretti*)

10,000 Dawns Short Stories

“Unpleasant Realities”

“The Road to Hell is Paved with Legislation”

(both collected in *10,000 Dawns: Poor Man’s Iliad*)

Star Wars Comic

“Equals and Opposites” in *Star Wars Tales* issue 21

(collected in *Star Wars Tales*, Vol. 6)

(reissued as a Hasbro Comic Pack with

Kyle Katarn and Yuuzhan Vong action figures)

Star Wars Essay Collections (Contributor)

A Long Time Ago: Exploring the Star Wars Cinematic Universe

A Galaxy Far, Far Away: Exploring Star Wars Comics

A More Civilized Age: Exploring the Star Wars Expanded Universe

Blade Runner Essay Collection (Contributor)

The Cyberpunk Nexus: Exploring the Blade Runner Universe

Other Star Wars Contributions

Dated battle maps for *Star Wars: The Essential Atlas* (official)

Timeline for *Star Wars Super Collector’s Wish Book*, 4th Ed. (unofficial)

The Force Awakens preview article for *Movie Magic* magazine (unofficial)

STAR WARS GOES BEYOND THE FILMS...

The definitive guide to U.S. Star Wars home video releases has returned, and the 11 live action, theatrical films were only the beginning!

It is time to explore the saga on the small screen, from its earliest television programs through its blockbuster fare on Disney+.

In this final volume, we examine cartoons, television movies, streaming content, behind-the-scenes specials, and strange items that stray far from the norm.

Join author Nathan P. Butler on a guided tour of the saga in animation, live action television programs, glimpses behind the saga, and more as the journey through A Saga on Home Video concludes.

III

IN THIS VOLUME

DROIDS

EWOKS

EWOK FILMS

CLONE WARS
(2D MICRO-SERIES)

THE CLONE WARS

REBELS

RESISTANCE

DISNEY+ CONTENT

LEGO STAR WARS

BEHIND-THE-SCENES
PROGRAMS

TIPS FOR COLLECTORS

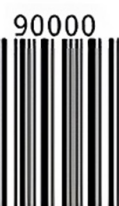
AND MUCH MORE...

SECOND EDITION
VOLUME 3 OF 3

ISBN 9798772596616



9 798772 596616



90000